RASPUTIN:

HIS MALIGNANT INFLUENCE AND HIS ASSASSINATION

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By

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PREFACE

I HAVE hitherto hesitated to publish my recollections of Rasputin. I have been anxious to avoid making untimely reference to events which were fatefully connected with the reign of the martyred Emperor Nicholas II.

Certain sections of the press, however, continue to publish misleading and calumnious articles on this subject; and too often even Russians, alas, gratify the morbid curiosity of the crowd with versions which are no less inexact.

Malicious scoffing at the expense of those who have atoned with their blood for all their involuntary errors is inadmissible, Yet in respect of our recent past there is another extreme – an exaggerated idealisation of the last reign, with all its unhealthy features.

These two extremes hinder in equal degree a sober and objective analysis of the past. They exert a particularly harmful influence on our younger generation, who are now growing up far away from the fatherland, but are destined sooner or later to take part in the building up of a new Russia.

We have no right to fill our children's minds

with vague legends. These will not suffice to imbue them with a real love of the fatherland and a sense of duty towards it.

It is important, moreover, that we should recognise errors committed in the past. We may thus avoid many a pitfall, and provide against many a disappointment in the future.

Such are the motives which impel me, as an eye-witness of some of those tragic events which occurred round the throne, to give a true account of all that I saw and heard; and I have resolved to overcome that heaviness of heart which possesses me whenever I touch upon the past — especially when I dwell upon the terrible sequel in the cellar of Ipatievski House at Ekaterinburg.

INTRODUCTION

THE whole country was seething with indignation while Rasputin, like a dark shadow, stood near the throne. The best representatives of the clergy raised their voices in defence of the Church and of Russia against the intrigues of this criminal upstart. Persons most closely associated with the Royal Family implored the Emperor and the Empress to dismiss him.

But all was in vain. His influence grew stronger and stronger; and, as it grew, the feeling of discontent in the country increased, spreading even to the remotest districts, where the simple peasantry, with true instinct, felt that there was something wrong at the fountain-head of power. And so, when Rasputin was killed, his death was acclaimed with general rejoicing.

Since then, however, a change of opinion has perhaps taken place. Stunned by the horrors of the revolution, harassed by the hardships of exile, Russians have forgotten much of the past. The Soviet Government has turned our country into such an inferno that any other political and social régime seems a paradise in comparison. The domination of the Third International has re-

vealed to the whole world the lengths to which crime may go.

Everything pales beside the Soviet torture-chambers, in which all the technique of the twentieth century has been applied in the infliction of the most excruciating physical and mental agonies.

Oppressed by this nightmare, the Russian refugee is sometimes apt to make an unwarrantable comparison between communist Russia and pre-revolutionary Russia; and he concludes that a score of Rasputins would have been preferable to the destruction of the old order of things.

It seems to him now that opposition to Rasputin and to his influence was in itself a revolutionary movement; that his assassination was the first shot, the signal and incentive for a *coup d'état;* and that if people had only reconciled themselves to him and had left him alone, the terrible upheaval which has laid waste the whole country would have been averted.

Such childish reasoning can only be explained by the reaction which has set in. Reaction can be just as blind and intolerant as revolution.

The revolution was not the result of Rasputin's death. Its causes were to be found at a much

earlier date. They lay in Rasputin himself, in his unscrupulous and cynical betrayal of Russia; in Rasputinism, that tangle of dark intrigue, egoistic self-seeking, hysterical madness, and vainglorious pursuit of power, which wrapped the throne in an impenetrable web and isolated the monarch from his people.

Among those who openly took their stand against this baneful influence were the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna, sister of the young Empress, the Metropolitan Anthony of St. Petersburg and Ladoga, the Metropolitan Vladimir, M. Samarin—the Head of the Holy Synod, M. Stolypin—the former Prime Minister, and M. Rodzianko—President of the Duma.

Can any tongue be found to condemn these as traitors and enemies of their country?

Yet they were convinced opponents of Rasputin. They resisted him in the name of their 'Faith, Tsar and Fatherland' in order to save Russia from revolution.

Deprived of all possibility of knowing what was happening in Russia, the Emperor could not distinguish between friend and foe. All unsuspecting, he trusted those who were driving both the Throne and Russia to their doom, and refused

the aid of those who could have helped him to save the country and the dynasty.

There is no doubt that the Emperor Nicholas II was called upon to reign during a period beset with anxieties. For many decades Russia had been undermined by the destructive work of hidden revolutionary organisations, directed and amply financed from abroad.

The revolutionary movement waxed and waned, but never for a moment ceased. The Government were forced to take up a defensive position. To maintain that position without exciting and provoking public opinion was very difficult, indeed almost impossible. The public resented the so-called 'repressions,' and felt it their duty to support the most extreme tendencies, not realising the danger thereby incurred.

After the firm rule of the Emperor Alexander III, who had suppressed revolutionary manifestations, it was hoped that his successor would allow the public to take a greater share in State affairs. At the beginning of his reign the Emperor Nicholas II declined to make any concessions whatever. But his self-appointed task of preserving intact the foundations of autocracy was incompatible with his personal characteristics.

The people are always willing to submit to one in whom they feel strength and firmness. All Russia instinctively divined the young Emperor's deficiency in these qualities. The revolutionary organisations seized the first opportunity to assert themselves, and the unfavourable issue of the unpopular Russo-Japanese war induced still wider circles to advocate open action.

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The first revolutionary storm broke out over Russia in 1905. It was successfully quelled. Outwardly peace was restored; but revolutionary propaganda continued slowly to undermine the authority of the Tsar.

Among the peasants, the agrarian disturbances of 1905 and the revolutionary slogan, 'Land and Freedom,' awakened dark instincts of anarchy and a thirst for possession. Workmen, especially in the big industrial centres, could not forget the appeal against capital.

As regards the educated classes, those who were inclined towards the Left began to dream of a democratic republic tinged with socialism, while more moderate elements were attracted towards an extreme form of parliamentary government. The wealthy *bourgeoisie* strove after power and

political influence in the country. The vast majority of the younger members of the *intelligentsia*, especially the students, raved about revolution, often converting the university lecture-rooms into places for political meetings. Young and old alike looked upon revolution as a supreme blessing, and the sole means of restoring social justice and general prosperity in Russia.

This naïve and visionary idealism on the part of the Russian *intelligentsia* transformed revolution into something very like a religion, an inspiration for deeds of heroism and self-sacrifice. It had its own 'saints.' Political criminals exiled to Siberia, or in hiding abroad – especially assassins of the terrorist type – were looked upon as heroes, worthy of the greatest reverence.

The Russian educated public of that time was affected by some kind of mental derangement which was reflected both in literature and in journalism. Highly cultivated and respected people often showed themselves quite incapable of understanding the basis of the political life of the country. They subjected the whole of the existing order of things to the most bitter and one-sided criticism; and, with a lack of insight which was almost infantile, they practically ignored

the incontestable services rendered to Russia by her Tsars, who, in the course of centuries, had built up a mighty empire. Hence, a quite erroneous idea of monarchical Russia was formed in foreign countries also.

Yet at the outbreak of the great war Russia presented a spectacle of amazing prosperity. Her finances were in brilliant order; industry and agriculture were developing with fabulous speed; new railways were under construction; the scope of national education was being widened; a number of State departments could be considered as models of their kind.

But at that time the *intelligentsia* – who influenced public opinion by means of the press and of the Duma – were not disposed to reckon with practical facts; they placed abstract political theories before everything else. They held it to be their primary duty to sap the bulwarks of autocracy, losing no opportunity of holding up its defects before the public.

Whenever disaster looms ahead, circumstances seem to unfold themselves in such a way as to precipitate it.

At that time, certain events were happening in the Imperial *entourage* which provided abundant

grounds for the most distressing misunderstandings of every kind, and roused a feeling of discontent throughout the country.

The private life of the Tsar's family was fatefully interwoven with the course of political events. The personal characteristics of the Emperor Nicholas II and of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna might not, perhaps, under other conditions, have exercised any noticeable influence on their reign; but those characteristics did, as a fact, play a tragic part in the fate of Russia and of the whole dynasty.

The Emperor Nicholas II, as heir to the throne, received an excellent education; but he did not have time to prepare himself for the difficult and many-sided duties of a monarch. The Emperor Alexander III, who had held the reins of power firmly in his own strong hands, died in the flower of life, and the burden of autocracy fell upon the youthful and inexperienced Tsetsarevich.

When the young Emperor brought his bride, the Princess Alice of Hesse, to St. Petersburg, it was to follow his father's coffin; and the Princess, draped in mourning from the moment of her arrival in Russia, was deprived of the possibility of making preliminary acquaintance with

her new country, its society, traditions and customs. Other Russian Empresses, as Tsetsarevni[1] had gradually familiarised themselves with Russian conditions, and had made the acquaintance of their future subjects in more simple surroundings; but the wife of the Emperor Nicholas II stepped straight into the Imperial *rôle*, to occupy that exalted position which demands wide experience of the people governed, yet offers few facilities for gaining it.

Society and the nation as a whole had their eyes fixed on the unknown young Empress, with an interest that could not but be embarrassing to her. Nervous and sensitive, she withdrew into herself. She gave an impression of reserve, coldness – occasionally even of discourtesy. Her popularity was thus prejudiced at the outset, especially as she was constantly being compared with the Dowager Empress Marie Feodorovna, who was beloved by everyone in Russia.

Nor was the early married life of the Imperial couple bathed in that care-free happiness which their position under different circumstances would have ensured. The Emperor Nicholas II was called upon to bear the twin load of his beloved

[1]Tsetsarevna: wife of the heir-apparent.

father's loss, and all the anxieties and responsibilities of the Russian Crown. The Empress Alexandra Feodorovna sincerely desired to share his burden; she offered him advice, which, owing to her very limited knowledge of Russia, may not always have been sound. She thus acquired, from the very first, the habit of exercising an influence in State affairs. This did not meet with public approval; it drew forth comments on the Emperor's weakness of will, while the Empress was censured for her love of power.

The young Empress soon realised that she had failed to gain real sympathy in her new country – in any case among the higher ranks of St. Petersburg society. She became more and more sensitive and nervous, and retired still further into private life, feeling that her good intentions were neither understood nor appreciated.

She was sometimes inclined to attribute her unpopularity in the country to the fact that four daughters in succession were born to her, instead of the long awaited son and heir.

Misfortunes such as the Japanese War, the outbreaks of terrorism, and the events of 1905, exercised a profound influence on her state of mind.

After she had embraced the Orthodox faith, she began, with the zeal and exaltation of a novice, to perform all its outward ceremonies; but she failed to penetrate into its deep and intricate spiritual meaning. Deeply religious by nature, as time went on she became more and more steeped in mysticism. She soon became attracted by the dark mysteries of occult forces, by spiritualism, and by every form of magic. She showed an interest in fanatics, soothsayers, clairvoyants. When a French occultist, a certain Doctor Philippe, made his appearance in St. Petersburg (he was reputed to have been sent to the Russian Court as a secret emissary of masonic organisations), the Empress believed in his superhuman powers. He arrived at the Court just before the birth of the heir-apparent, and the Empress placed all her maternal hopes in his supernatural aid. He left a short time afterwards, his unexpected departure giving rise to the rumour that those who had sent him to Russia were dissatisfied with their envoy, and had recalled him.

Shortly after the departure of Philippe a new 'prophet' appeared in St. Petersburg, this time of purely Russian origin, – Grigori Rasputin, a Siberian peasant who had assumed the guise of

a pious Russian pilgrim. He made a very deep impression on the Empress. Those whose patronage had enabled him to gain a standing in St. Petersburg subsequently detected his true character, and tried to secure his removal from the Court. But it was already too late; Rasputin had installed himself too firmly to be dislodged.

Rasputin's influence over the Empress was primarily due to the intervention of Anna Vyrubova, who occupied a quite exceptional position at the Court of Tsárskoe Selo.

Vyrubova's proximity to the Empress, and the influence which she acquired in the Imperial Family, was just as tragic a fatality as Rasputin's appearance at the Court.

The circumstances which brought together the Empress and Anna Vyrubova are very characteristic of both. Vyrubova – at that time Mlle. Taneieva, daughter of the Chief of His Imperial Majesty's Personal Chancery – lay dangerously ill with typhoid fever. She dreamt that the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna entered her room and took her by the hand. This was the turning-point of her illness; recovery set in, and she simply lived for the moment when she might be able to meet her illustrious protectress.

The Empress, who had been told of this vision, and with her natural kindness wanted to please the sick girl, went to see her; and from this moment Vyrubova's adoration knew no bounds.

Of limited and undeveloped intelligence, but cunning, servile, and of hysterical temperament, Vyrubova was inclined to exaggerate her feelings; but the Empress believed in her sincerity, and, touched by such exceptional devotion, after her recovery, brought her into close personal contact with herself.

Vyrubova's unhappy marriage and subsequent breach with her husband inspired the Empress with sincere pity for 'poor Annie,' and strengthened her attachment to this trivial woman. The closest of friendships was formed between them.

In all her subsequent actions Vyrubova was guided by her instinct. In spite of her intimacy with the Empress, her psychology was rather that of a clever maid seeking by every possible means to gain the exclusive confidence of her mistress.

While impressing the Empress with the certitude of her boundless devotion and blind and unchanging adoration, Vyrubova at the same time instilled into her a feeling of ill-will towards

all others who surrounded her. She would sorrowfully and indignantly assure her mistress that not only society, but even the members of the Imperial Family were unaware of the Empress' merits. She alone, Anna Vyrubova, worshipped her, and could appreciate Her Majesty at her real value.

In spite of her lack of intelligence, Vyrubova was not slow to realise that the more she was able to isolate the Empress, the greater would her own influence be, as her one true friend.

Her attachment to the Empress was undoubtedly sincere; but it was by no means disinterested, and she eventually wove a whole net of egoistical intrigue around it.

A more suitable person could not have been found to bring Rasputin and the Empress together. It was easy for the astute *starets*[1] to make

[1]Foreigners persistently style Rasputun either monk or priest. He was neither. The term *starets* was applied to him by his female admirers. In Russian monasteries it is usually applied to monks who are held in special reverence on account of their holy lives. The faithful look to them for spiritual guidance, turn to them for advice in difficult moments, and supplicate them in prayer. Such *startsi* were, and are, rarely found, and in but few monasteries throughout Russia. They lead an ascetic life, practising all forms of privation. Rasputin had nothing in common with them.

this hysterical woman believe in his saintliness, so that she in her turn might influence the Empress with his suggestions.

But it was after Rasputin had acquired authority in the Imperial Family and the Empress had come to believe in him as a just and godly man, that Vyrubova scented the possibilities which lay before her. This insignificant person began to feel the lowest kind of craving for power. Her friendship with the Empress had already given her an exceptional position; but with the advent of Rasputin her importance was increased. She became the Empress' most trusted confidante, the only intermediary between Her Majesty and Rasputin.

It must be supposed that Rasputin, relying on Vyrubova as the most convenient tool at his disposal, in his turn encouraged the Empress to confide in her. It is difficult to believe that Anna Vyrubova, having become the centre of Rasputin's influence and of his constant interference in State affairs, cherished any political designs of her own. Her intelligence was too limited for sustained thought. But she was intoxicated with playing the *rôle* of 'an influential person.' The weaving of incessant intrigues, now giving support to one

person, now withdrawing it from that, – this juggling with power completely obsessed her.

But Rasputin's influence in State affairs, through the agency of Vyrubova, did not immediately make itself felt. It was only after the Emperor had elected to change his permanent place of residence from St. Petersburg to Tsarskoe Selo that the restricted circles to which the Imperial Family was thereby confined made it possible for the *staretś* to exercise his power.

The Emperor Nicholas II was shy by nature. He avoided public appearances whenever possible, and preferred a quiet life within his family circle.

He became accustomed to this existence from his early youth; for the Emperor Alexander III had spent comparatively few years of his reign in St. Petersburg, and had lived chiefly at Gachina.

But the prevailing conditions during the two reigns were far from similar; stormy years had set in, and the Emperor's withdrawal from the capital had the most dire results.

The Emperor Nicholas II did not seek wide intercourse with his subjects. His most frequent appearances were among his regiments of the Guard; he was chiefly acquainted with military circles. He carried on his duties as a monarch

almost exclusively at Tsarskoe Selo, where his ministers reported to him. He worked hard and with great perseverance; but he did not see his country at close quarters, and his country did not know him. Only those who had access to the Palace came face to face with a monarch who was extraordinarily fascinating, charming in the kindly simplicity of his ways, and full of an ardent love for Russia.

The Empress Alexandra Feodorovna greatly encouraged him in this life of retirement. As time went on, she shunned not only St. Petersburg society, but even the members of the Imperial Family.

In the solitary surroundings of Tsarskoe Selo the Emperor shared his leisure hours with the Empress. Intelligent, delicate in feeling, and exceedingly good-natured, gradually and unconsciously he became accustomed in certain matters to subject his will to the firm, tenacious personality of his wife. She became his only friend, filling his life so completely that there was no room left for the influence of others.

The Empress suffered from a malady of the nervous system, and from a serious neurosis of the heart. This affected her mental outlook and

often clouded the atmosphere at Tsarskoe Selo. Her state of health alarmed and distressed the Emperor, and still more confined his attention to family cares.

But their greatest trial was the incurable illness of the long-expected and only son, the Tsetsarevich Alexis. He was afflicted with *haemophilia*, a hereditary disease, passed to male members of a family through the female line.

The Empress, who was a tender and loving mother, suffered doubly; she was tortured by her constant fear for the life of the Tsetsarevich, and by the knowledge that she herself had handed down the illness to him.

Efforts were made to keep his illness secret. But secrecy could not be indefinitely preserved; it only encouraged the rumours of all kinds which were spread in society, thanks to the solitary life of the Emperor.

A veil of mystery was thrown over the Imperial Family. Curiosity was aroused, illwill was engendered, and no one was led to imagine how deeply the parents suffered over their child, and in what constant anguish they spent their life. Such conditions offered a wide field of action to Rasputin.

The Empress blindly believed in his supernatural powers; and she tried to convince the Emperor of them.

She believed that only a miracle could save her son. Rasputin managed to imbue her with the idea that he alone could perform this miracle; and that while he remained in close contact with the Imperial Family the Tsetsarevich would remain alive and well.

Later she became convinced that Rasputin alone could save Russia and that he was endowed with a higher wisdom, with an instinctive knowledge of character, and with the gift of foresight.

An atmosphere of unhealthy mysticism and lack of equilibrium pervaded the Imperial Family. This atmosphere grew more intense as time went on, and the Emperor, at the side of the sick Empress, with Anna Vyrubova and Rasputin in close attendance, found his daily life and routine completely enveloped in it. At times he tried to resist the influence surrounding him. He went so far as to dismiss Rasputin; but he lacked the strength to fight to the end against forces which now appeared to have become a part of his life.

The outbreak of the war seemed to disperse these clouds. A wave of patriotism swept over the

whole country. Party differences were set aside, and all dissatisfation with the Supreme Power was forgotten. The Tsar and his people were at one.

But this national unity was of short duration.

As the struggle dragged on, the clouds gathered again[1], and Rasputin reappeared like an evil genius at Tsarskoe Selo.

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Straggling along the high, bare banks of the river Tura lies the village of Pokrovskoe. From

[1]The public frowned at the news of military reverses; and here and there the terrible word 'treason' was heard. Public opinion, exasperated by German propaganda, attributed to the little-loved Empress the most monstrous crimes. The vilest rumours were spread in Russia by German agents and by revolutionary organisations working in concert with them, and drawing money from the same source. One of their ruses was to lay special emphasis on the Empress' German origin, and on her unchanging love for the land of her birth. This was a particularly obnoxious form of propaganda, as she disliked Prussia, and detested the Kaiser Wilhelm.

Nor was the emperor immune from calumny. He was alleged to be contemplating the signature of a separate peace, at the instigation of his wife. Yet not only did he when still on the throne repudiate any such suggestion, but after his abdication, in his farewell order to the Army (which was unfortunately not made public by the express interdiction of the Provisional Government), he called upon Russia to fight the enemy to the end, in full co-operation with the Allies. What is more, he refused to accept any conditional help from the Kaiser Wilhelm

the hill in the heart of it, where the church stands, the roads stretch away in all directions; they are laid out straight, and are bordered with roomy peasant cottages.

Everything seems to breathe prosperity. The streets are full of fowl. The farmyards abound with cows, sheep and pigs, and sturdy little horses of local breed that look as if they are cast in steel. The cottage interiors are spotlessly clean. The wide window-sills are bright with flowers.

If you leave the village, to stand for a moment on the banks of the Tura, you are confronted with the spaciousness of Siberia, a spaciousness the like of which is probably not to be found the whole world over. Meadows and steppes dotted with birch groves stretch away into the distance, and beyond them lies the *urman*, an endless forest of fir and pine.

at the time when the whole Imperial Family were in the hands of the Bolsheviks at Ekaterinburg, where they were living under the most terrible conditions, on the very verge of destruction.

It was imperative that every cause for suspicion or slander should be eliminated by the most vigorous measures. But the Emperor had taken over the supreme command and was established at G.H.Q. His reserves of energy were undermined, and, under the weight of overpowering moral fatigue, he had almost ceded his power to the Empress.

In summertime the *urman* is strewn with berries of all sorts, raspberries, currants red and black, and bramble-berries. The forest-clearings are carpeted with strawberries.

The woods abound with game; the grasses and flowers grow almost to the height of man.

No village can be seen for miles around.

In Siberia villages are few and far between; they are often separated by hundreds of *versts*. Towns are still more rare. The railway that runs through the municipality of Tyumen passes very wide of Pokrovskoe.

In the winter, communication is maintained by road only.

Wrapped in a heavy fur coat, and a dogskin cape as well – the best protection of all from the Siberian frost – the traveller is whirled along in a light sledge over the glistening snow-covered road which stretches out like a silver ribbon before him. The swift horses do not know fatigue, and the passenger drowses, lulled by the monotonous tinkling of the sledge bells.

The white plains flash by. The forests close in. Siberian cedars and fir-trees tower above in gigantic columns, shaking down snow from their heavily laden branches.

In the daytime the bright sunlight on the snow is blinding. At night there is the moon, or the distant stars; and sometimes the bluish-green aurora of the northern lights will flash out across the sky – and all around seems fairyland.

In the summer, boats ply along the Tura from Pokrovskoe to Tyumen. To the north, down-stream, the Tura runs into the Tobol, and the steamer carries you to Tobolsk, a small dreary township far removed from any railway, but the administrative centre of an immense province occupying the north-west region of Siberia.

It was along the rivers Tura and Tobol, from Tyumen to Tobolsk, that the Emperor Nicholas II and his family were taken into captivity in the summer of 1917.

The steamboat passed by Pokrovskoe, and the Empress (as was told afterwards by one of those who voluntarily accompanied the Imperial Family) watched the shore from the deck, and followed with fixed and melancholy gaze the slowly receding roofs of the peasants' cottages, and the tall white church-tower.

It was in the village of Pokrovskoe that Grigori Rasputin was born and spent his youth. He left

it to take up those wanderings which eventually brought him to St. Petersburg.

The Siberians are a people of mixed origin. Chance brought their fathers and grandfathers into this rich and fertile country, just as a river's current will carry down pebbles and sand.

In Western Siberia live many Old Believers. They are of various persuasions, and they are settled in the forests and other inaccessible places. Their ancestors came here long ago, to escape the persecution of the Government. They strictly observe their ancient customs, and lead godly and austere lives, zealously guarding the memory of their past, and the books of Divine Service in their cumbrous bindings.

But there are other inhabitants of Siberia, the descendants of fugitive and banished convicts; these try not to speak or think of the past. Whose business is it if the forefathers of some of them passed through the whole of Siberia in shackles?

They are well off and independent. They have grown up in full freedom, out of the reach of all authority, and have not been accustomed to bow down to anyone.

The Siberians are a bold people, rough, but usually very honest. They strongly disapprove of

theft, and often take the law into their own hands to punish it.

The only person whom they ever reproach with his past is the thief, particularly the horse-stealer. There is a special Siberian term, *varnak*, which means 'vagabond,' 'run-away thief,' and they can use no worse insult.

This was the very nickname by which, from his early youth, Grigori Rasputin was notorious in his village.

The blood of his forbears showed itself in him from his birth; the son of a horse-stealer, he continued in the same profession. This shameful and dangerous pursuit gave him scope for the exercise of his dexterity, his cunning and rapacious instincts.

More than once he was caught red-handed, and thrashed within an inch of his life. On at least one occasion the police arrived on the scene only just in time to tear his bleeding and mutilated frame from the heavy hands of the infuriated muzhiks.

Another man would not have survived such thrashings, but it was as if a blacksmith's hammer were beating on an anvil. Rasputin bore everything, and only grew stronger from such treatment.

The settled, industrious life of a peasant could offer no attractions to his thievish nature. His instinct was to wander. He would often visit places distant from Pokrovskoe, sometimes disappearing for long intervals. During one of these prolonged absences it was rumoured that he had been converted, and was living a strictly ascetic life in some remote retreat, or in one of the distant monasteries.

It is possible that somewhere in his restless soul vague searchings had been awakened, and that for a time he had been genuinely drawn towards religion. But the pure teaching of the Orthodox Church was completely foreign to his nature; what really was likely to attract him was the obscure mysticism of the most perverted sects.

No exact information can be found concerning the places which he visited in his wanderings, or the people he met. All that is definitely established is that he often visited a certain Orthodox monastery occupied by sectarians[1] who had been sent thither for 'correction and reform.'

The Siberian monasteries resembled large and prosperous estates rather than the cloisters of

[1]Dissenters who had come into sharp conflict with the Orthodox Church and its authorities.

devout ascetics. The monks themselves, few in number, were engrossed in their everyday duties, and did not pay much attention to the sectarians domiciled among them. Rasputin could, therefore, speak very freely with these dissenters. He could penetrate all their secrets, while outwardly remaining a pious, zealous and humble pilgrim.

The immense dynamic force with which nature had endowed him could not fail to attract special attention. Like an Indian fakir, he could go without food or sleep; and, in order to develop his will-power, he trained himself to such a pitch of asceticism by means of these ostensibly religious practices that at times his companions might have looked upon him as a 'saint' – whereas in reality his soul was filled with an inscrutable darkness that was purely of the devil.

The sectarians looked upon him as a discovery, and in their own way greatly appreciated him.

The Orthodox clergy also became interested in him, not suspecting that this fasting and pious supplicant was playing a double game. From the very outset, he had kept his sectarian leanings dark; and for his own private designs he was careful to preserve an outward connection with representatives of the Church.

He succeeded in acquiring, by rote, a smattering of the Holy Scriptures, and in absorbing a number of spiritual and moral precepts; and he trained himself to assume the guise of a 'man of God,' of a *starets* endowed with wisdom and spiritual insight.

His marvellous memory, combined with exceptional powers of observation and assimilation, aided him in this respect. He could not, at this time, have had any notion of his future career. He harboured no idea of going to St. Petersburg, or even into European Russia, from which Siberians feel themselves cut off. Probably the idle and wandering life of a pilgrim attracted him for its own sake; it seemed pleasanter than the uninterrupted labour of the peasants at his home.

His fate was decided by a chance meeting with a young missionary-monk, a well-informed, deeply religious man, as pure and as naïve as a child.

He believed in Rasputin's sincerity, and presented him to Bishop Theophan, who, in his turn, brought the impostor to St. Petersburg.

Any ordinary peasant would have become confused by life in the capital. He would have lost himself in the intricate web of Court, society and official relations.

No ordinary muzhik would have had the courage, particularly while everything was as yet strange to him, to show such ease and independence in such surroundings.

Incidentally, the easy manner and familiar tone which this former horse-stealer adopted even towards the most highly-placed personages, was a very considerable factor in his success. Rasputin went in and out of the Tsar's palace as calmly and unconstrainedly as if it had been his own cottage at Pokrovskoe. This made a deep impression. People were apt to think that nothing short of real saintliness could cause a simple Siberian peasant to show no sign whatever of servility before an earthly power. But this muzhik was not slow to observe, remember, and turn over in his mind everything that was of use to him in the noisy and crowded capital.

He almost flawlessly analysed certain characters, quickly perceiving the weak points of those whom he desired to influence, and adapting himself to them.

At Tsarskoe Selo he appeared in the guise of a righteous man who had consecrated himself to God; in society drawing-rooms, among his female admirers, he was much less circumspect; and

finally, at home or in a private room at a restaurant, in the intimate company of his associates, he gave full vent to his drunkenness and wanton debauchery.

In certain – incidentally, very small – circles of the highest ranks of St. Petersburg society, occultism of every kind was cultivated. People sought after thrilling sensations at spiritual *séances*, and were drawn towards everything that was piquant and unusual in the realm of unwholesome mysticism. In this environment Rasputin was assured of marked success.

He tried to hide his connection with sectariansim, yet on coming into closer contact with him people instinctively felt that, still deeper than his occult powers, there lay within him some other disturbing force which attracted them.

This element was Khlystism, with its intoxicating, sensual mysticism.

Khlystism is essentially sexual in character; it is a blend of the coarsest animal passion with a belief in the highest spiritual revelation.

The 'prayer-meetings' of the Khlysts combine, in an intense degree, religious ecstasy and erotic abandon. The Khlysts believe that at the height of their hysterical excitement the Holy Spirit

descends among them, and that the licentious union of the sexes which is the customary end of their ceremonies is nothing else than an act of 'God's blessing.'

Khlystism is without doubt a survival of pagan times. The ceremony begins with a slow rhythmic dance, which changes to a mad whirl. There is a blinding glitter of candles in the room during 'prayer.' and the inevitable climax is a wild, amorous debauch. It would seem that in the dark recesses of the national consciousness there may still linger some feeling or memory of bygone times which has taken the form of a sacrilegious distortion of the Christian faith.

It is characteristic that the Khlysts have never severed their official ties with the Orthodox Church. They attend the services, acknowledge the sacraments, and frequently partake of Holy Communion.

Rasputin justified all his monstrous debauchery with typical Khlyst reasonings; and sometimes instilled into women the belief that contact with him was far from being a sin.

He went from house to house, overwhelmed by invitations. Some desired to see him out of curiosity; others especially in the early days,

were interested by stories of his saintliness; while others, again, with a morbid strain in them, were at once infatuated by him.

After he had acquired an influence in political circles he was still more eagerly besieged. His good graces were sought, he was given presents and bribes, he was 'wined and dined.'

His sojourn in St. Petersburg was one long holiday, one continuous debauch. Life had indeed changed for this one-time fugitive horse-stealer.

It was natural that in the end his head should be turned by the realisation of his power, by the servility of those who surrounded him, by the unusual amount of money at his disposal, by all this undreamed of luxury. His cynicism passed all bounds. How could it be otherwise? Could he stand on ceremony with those who had waited in his hall, and with women who were ready to kiss, with reverence, his dirty hands? The more he felt his strength the less he respected those who surrounded him.

But his popularity was very restricted. He moved only within the limited circle composed of his female admirers, and of those persons connected with the Government who needed his support. All the saner elements of St. Peters-

burg disapproved of him. Satiated with debauchery and drunk with power, he degenerated, and lost all perspicacity and prudence.

His end was a fitting conclusion to the whole of his life; his body, which to the last had resisted both poison and bullet, was thrown into the waters of the Neva. The Siberian wanderer, who had set out on too venturesome a path, would have met with a similar end in any case, yet had he met it in his native village, it is doubtful whether anyone would have troubled to search for his remains in the waters of the Tura.

. . . . . .

There would seem to be no inherent connection between Rasputinism and Bolshevism. Yet the link is there, and it is a very strong one.

Rasputin was the personification of that obscure power which rises from the lowest depths of life and is pregnant with the seeds of disintegration and disruption of all moral principles. He was the forerunner of coming infamies and terrors.

'A muzhik in his greasy boots,' he would say of himself, entered the palace, and traipsed about the Imperial parquets.

With those 'greasy boots' he trampled down the people's ancient faith in the purity and justice

of the Tsar's calling. Throughout the whole of his career, there lurked in the person of Rasputin the seeds of approaching Bolshevism with its ignorance, greed, cynicism and depravity, with its dark passion for power, its denial of responsibility before God or man.

Rasputin became a weapon in the hands of Russia's enemies. But were the Germans her only enemy? Or did there stand behind Rasputin some other power? — a power which sought the political enfeeblement of Russia and her moral disintegration and destruction, in order to strengthen its own diabolical hold on her? Rasputin duped the Empress and the Emperor who trusted him. The Bolsheviks duped the whole of the Russian people, who blindly followed them in some sort of wild, intoxicated, Khlystic ecstasy of revolution.

Unknown to himself, Rasputin was, in a sense, the first 'Commissary' of Bolshevism. He had drawn near to the throne in order to trample on its might and extinguish its majesty.

Others followed him. . . .

Rasputinism paralysed the supreme power because it did not meet with a strong and organised opposition among influential people prompted

solely by ideas of duty and by purely moral motives.

Bolshevism likewise met with no obstacle. Flabbiness, confusion, vanity, party blindness and self-seeking, the absence of a united national idea, the illusion of revolution – hung like a poisonous mist over those Russians who found themselves in power after the fall of the monarchy. Under cover of this mist the enemies of Russia stealthily crept up and dealt her the long premeditated blow.

Stunned and bewildered, the people readily fell into their hands.

Bolshevism dropped its anchor in a foul and muddy pool. It caught the refuse of every class of society. It brought with it a whole army of aliens for whom Russia could never be a home – for whom Russia was, and is, a stranger's house, given over to them to be plundered and defiled.

A great country became the home of the most appalling depravity and the most monstrous crimes.

Unheard-of outrages were inflicted on a defenceless people. Russia was transformed into a laboratory for the preparation of poisons destined for the destruction of all mankind.

In the whole world there was not – nor has there yet been found – a power ready to rise up unhesitatingly in defence, not of the Russian people only, but of all that is best in morals and in culture.

Civilised countries live in close contact with the leprosy of Bolshevism; they stretch out a hand to the servants of the devil and are not choked by the moral rot and stench which, like poison gas, are spread over the entire earth by that criminal organisation – the Third International.

Peoples and their governments do not seem to understand that Bolshevism is something more than a mere form of administration closely fitted into the framework of the Soviets; they do not realise that first and foremost it is a moral perversion – a terrible and complicated disease of mankind of to-day, a disease which stifles conscience, duty and honour.

Bolshevism paralyses and destroys the heritage of long centuries of spiritual culture; it gradually transforms man into a civilised brute, governed by his lowest instincts and devoid of all needs of a higher order.

Bolshevism is the most determined enemy of Christianity. It is as if the powers of darkness

were endeavouring to storm the heavens. It was not without meaning that the communists staged a 'trial of God' and repudiated and condemned Him.

The Church, the mainstay and the crown of Russia, alone withstood the onslaught of the revolution.

She overcame, within herself, the virus of Rasputinism which had done its best to poison her; she has not yet yielded to force or threats, or to the disintegration and corruption of Bolshevism. She has saved, and is saving, the soul of the Russian people, with all its high moral qualities. She is destined to face the formidable task of Russia's moral cleansing.

Purification is essential; without it no new life can be built up, no new system of government can be established. Any form of government which is not founded on all that is best in the spiritual life of the people will prove frail and fleeting, and will end in a repetition of the terrible calamity of 1917, when a throne which had stood firm for centuries collapsed, having lost – thanks to Rasputin – its moral authority.

Documents exposing Bolshevism and the Soviet Government are published in all languages. A

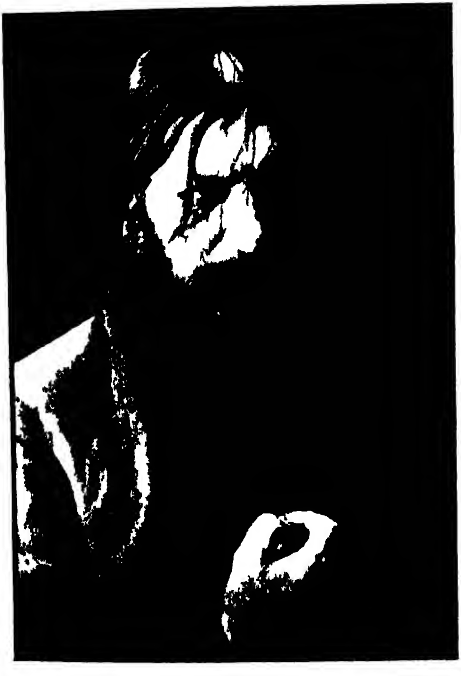
whole new literature has appeared – a literature which by no means exhausts the terrible truth.

The whole world reads books which are written in blood, and yet remains indifferent not only to the position of Russia, but to its own ultimate fate.

Humanity of to-day is blind to everything save the small concerns of the moment, petty personal interests and the thirst for immediate success. It closes its eyes to the spectacle of a great country, exhausted and bleeding, struggling alone against the powers of darkness.

Is not this also a form of Rasputinism, which has gained possession of our epoch, and of the whole of mankind to-day?

Paris, 1926.



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THE END OF RASPUTIN

CHAPTER I

HOW I MADE RASPUTIN'S ACQUAINTANCE

My first meeting with Rasputin was at the G.s' house in St. Petersburg in 1909.

I had known the G.'s for years, my particular friend being their daughter, M.

As everything connected with the name of Rasputin is apt to excite a feeling of disgust, I would like to add a few words concerning M. to distinguish her from the Rasputin clan.

She was exceptionally pure-minded, good-natured, and responsive, and unusually impressionable. But there was much nervous exaltation in her character; and thanks to this, her spiritual impulses always predominated over her reason. Religion played the chief part in her life, but her religious feelings were tinged with an unhealthy mysticism.

Trustful to excess, she was totally incapable of judging either people or facts. When anything surprised her, she blindly yielded to the impression which it made on her. She remained wholly under the influence of those in whom she had

once believed, and she did not readily distinguish good from evil.

In these circumstances it was not a matter for surprise that Rasputin should be a frequent visitor at the G.'s.

When I returned from abroad, in 1909, I found that M. was one of his ardent admirers. She sincerely and firmly believed in his uprightness and spiritual purity; she regarded him as one of God's elect, as an almost supernatural being. Her infatuation for the *starets*[1] did not surprise me in the least.

Rasputin, with his natural perspicacity, was not slow to see in her his future devotee. He divined her spiritual leanings, and gained her complete confidence. M.'s purity prevented her from seeing the grime and horror that hung about the man. She was too naive to form any true estimate of his actions. Her greatest joy lay in the full spiritual subjection of her personality. She was happy to have found a 'Holy Guide.' Not only did she fail to analyse the qualities of this 'teacher,' but she timidly withdrew into herself whenever she felt anyone trying to expose him. The ideal, which she

[1]See note on page 22.

had formed in her imagination, of 'the divine *starets*' blotted out the true Rasputin from her sight.

At our first meeting after my return, she began to talk about him. She described him as a man of rare spiritual strength, filled with God's blessing, who had been sent into the world to cleanse and heal our hearts and to guide our wills, thoughts, and conduct.

I remember that I adopted a sceptical attitude, although at that time I had nothing particular against Rasputin – indeed I had heard very little about him. Knowing M., I decided that she was simply passing through one of the usual phases of enthusiasm typical of her highly-strung nature.

But something in her words seemed to arouse my curiosity. I asked her many questions. With great animation and enthusiasm M. proceeded to tell me more about 'the shining personality of the *starets*.'

Her story was one long eulogy. Rasputin was a healer; he interceded for mankind; he was an altruist; a peacemaker, a comforter of the sorrow-stricken; he was a new apostle, God's chosen emissary; he stood on a different plane from the rest of mankind; he knew no human

weaknesses nor vices, and his whole life was spent in asceticism and prayer.

M.'s fervour and conviction did not inspire me with any faith in the miraculous gifts of the *starets*, but they increased my curiosity and roused in me a desire to meet him. I told her that I should like to make the acquaintance of this remarkable man. She was quite delighted with my suggestion, and the meeting was not long delayed.

Some days later I drove up to the G.s' house on the Winter Canal, where this first meeting was to take place. When I entered the drawing-room, Rasputin had not yet arrived. M. was seated with her mother at the tea-table. Both were very nervous and excited; especially the daughter, who seemed to be in a state of suppressed anxiety. I felt that she was nervous about the first impression that Rasputin would make on me, and that at the same time she desired that I, like herself, should be inspired with veneration for him. Both mother and daughter seemed to be in a state of devout tension, as if the arrival of a wonder-working ikon was awaited in the house.

This attitude still further excited my curiosity and desire to see this 'wonderful man.' We did

not have to wait long. The door leading from the hall soon opened, and Rasputin walked in, with a mincing gait. He came straight towards me, and with the words, 'Good day, my dear,' made a movement as if to embrace me. I drew back. With a sly, sickly smile, he went forward to M. and her mother. He embraced them both without any ceremony, kissing them with an air of gracious condescension.

My first glace at him filled me with dislike of his appearance; there was something repugnant about him. He was of medium height, thick-set yet rather thin, with long arms. His big head was covered with an untidy tangle of hair. Above his forehead there was a bald patch which, as I subsequently learnt, came from a blow administered to him when he was beaten for horse-stealing. He seemed to be about forty years old. He was wearing a long coat, wide trousers and long boots. His face was of the most ordinary peasant type – a coarse oval, with large, ugly features overgrown with a slovenly beard, and with a long nose; his small grey eyes looked out from under bushy eyebrows with piercing yet shifty glances. His whole bearing attracted attention; he appeared unconstrained in his movements, and yet there

seemed to be something dissembled about him – something suspicious, cowardly and searching. All these details did not, of course, strike me at our first meeting.

He greeted us, and sat down for a moment. Then he rose and for some time walked about the room with his quick, short steps, muttering incoherently to himself. His voice was thick, and his pronunciation indistinct.

We drank our tea and looked at him in silence– M. with enraptured attention, I with curiosity and distrust.

At last he came to the tea-table, settled down in an armchair by my side, and began to submit me to a searching scrutiny.

A conversation about nothing in particular was started, Rasputin, apparently wishing to maintain the tone of one inspired from above, held forth in a dictatorial manner. His speech was quick, voluble, yet often faltering. He quoted scripture texts which had no connection with each other, and his words gave the impression of something involved, if not chaotic.

As he talked I carefully watched his expression. There was certainly something unusual in this muzhik's features.

The longer I examined him, the more I was struck by his eyes; they were amazingly repulsive. Not only was there no trace of spiritual refinement in the face, but it called to mind that of a cunning and lascivious satyr. The peculiarity of his eyes was that they were small, almost colourless, and too closely set in large, exceptionally deep sockets; so that from a distance they were not visible — they seemed to get lost in the depths of their recesses. Hence it was often difficult to see whether they were open or not, and only the feeling that a needle was piercing through you told you that he was looking at you and examining you closely. His keen and penetrating gaze did, in fact, convey a feeling of some hidden, supernatural power.

His smile, too, was arresting; it was sickly yet cruel, cunning and sensual. Indeed, the whole of his being was redolent of something unspeakably revolting, hidden under the mask of hypocrisy and cant.

M. was full of excitement at the presence of Rasputin. Her eyes shone; her cheeks burned with a nervous flush. She and her mother did not take their eyes off him; with bated breath they caught at every word the *starets* uttered.

At last he rose, enveloped us all in a would-be loving and caressing glance, and turning to me, said, while he pointed to M., 'What a true friend you have in her. Listen to her, and she will be your spiritual wife. Yes . . . she has spoken well of you, told me many things; and now I see for myself that you are suited to each other. . . . My dear, – I do not know your Christian name – you will go a long way, a very long way.'

And with these words he left the room.

I also took my leave, absorbed in my impressions of this enigma.

A few days later, I heard from M. that Rasputin had taken a great liking to me, and that he wanted to meet me again.

CHAPTER II

ANXIETY AMONG LOYAL SUBJECTS OF THE THRONE

Soon after my first meeting with Rasputin I left for England, and went up to Oxford.

On one occasion, when I was visiting an English Princess closely related to the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, our conversation turned on him.

The Princess listened to my stories about him with great interest. She fully realised the danger to Russia involved in his proximity to the Court; and after briefly sketching the mental characteristics of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, she expressed a fear that certain of those traits, especially her leaning towards morbid mysticism, might cause grave complications in the future if Rasputin were to remain near the Royal Family.

At that time my parents lived in St. Petersburg and spent the summer at Tsarskoe Selo.

My mother was much liked by the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna and was often with her. Rasputin's proximity to the Emperor and Empress greatly perturbed her, and in her lettters to me she often mentioned her anxiety. She also

communicated her fears to the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna, a friend of many years' standing.

The Grand Duchess, who resided in Moscow, shared all her apprehensions, and during her rare visits to St. Petersburg she exerted every effort to persuade the Emperor and Empress to dismiss the pernicious *starets*.

At that time the danger of Rasputin's presence at Tsarskoe Selo was not generally realised. His appearance at the Court was probably a mere chance; and only later, when the enemies of Russia and of the dynasty found a field of action ready prepared for them – realising how all-powerful Rasputin had become, and to what an extent 'autocracy' was in his hands – were they able to make use of him for their own ends.

My mother was one of the first openly to oppose Rasputin. She had a long conversation with the Empress, and quite frankly told her all that she thought on this matter.

Her words made a great impression on the Empress, who apparently understood my mother's sincerity, and felt the justice of her conclusions. In parting from her, the Empress, in most

touching terms, expressed a wish to see her as often as possible.

But Rasputin's friends were not slumbering. They fully realised the danger of such an intimacy, and contrived to win back their control over the Empress's sick imagination, and gradually to alienate her from my mother.

Many members of the Imperial Family, with the Dowager Empress Marie Feodorovna at their head, also tried to influence the Emperor and Empress; but in vain.

And then began a struggle between those who were sincerely devoted to Russia and the Throne, and those who shamelessly used Rasputin's influence to gain access to the Emperor and Empress, and so further their own selfish ends and secret political schemes.

From childhood I had been accustomed to look upon the Imperial Family as people apart, different from ourselves. I held them in veneration, as beings of a higher order, girt with a sort of halo that set them beyond all criticism. Any aspersion cast upon them filled me with indignation, and I paid no attention to the stories I heard of Rasputin's relations with the Court.

THE END OF RASPUTIN

In the autumn of 1912 I came down from Oxford and returned to my home in Russia.

I had many plans for the future; but they were still rather vague. My meeting with Princess Irina Alexandrovna[1] altered my fate. In a short time our engagement was announced.

At the outbreak of war I was in Germany with my wife and parents. By order of the Kaiser Wilhelm we were arrested in Berlin. We escaped by a miracle and reached Copenhagen, where we found the Dowager-Empress, who brought us safely to St. Petersburg.

The enthusiasm provoked by the declaration of war had already begun to subside, and many people were pessimistically inclined. Tsarskoe Selo was enveloped in gloom. The Emperor and Empress, cut off from the world, out of touch with their subjects, surrounded by the Rasputin clan, were deciding questions of world-wide importance.

Could this forebode anything but disaster?

[1]The daughter of the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich and the Grand Duchess Xenia Alexandrovna.

CHAPTER III

RASPUTIN IS REVEALED TO ME

And so there was no hope that the Emperor and Empress would ever understand the full truth about Rasputin, and dismiss him from the Court.

What other steps, therefore, could be taken to deliver the Emperor and Russia from this evil genius?

The thought arose; 'There is only one way; to put an end to the criminal *staretz*.'

The idea first entered my head after a conversation with my wife and mother as far back as 1915, when we had been discussing the terrible effects of Rasputin's influence.

The subsequent march of political events made me turn to it again, and it took firm root in my mind.

The representations made by the members of the Imperial Family against Rasputin were followed by a number of open demonstrations of a public character, both by individuals and by various organisations. Reports were submitted, resolutions were drawn up, and collective appeals were made to the Supreme Power. But the

Emperor and Empress remained deaf to all supplications, advice, warnings and threats. The more Rasputin was opposed, the more convincing the evidence against him, the less attention was paid to the matter at Tsarskoe Selo. He was indeed impregnable. He made such adroit use of his assumed mask of hypocrisy that no credence whatever was given there to reports of his profligacy. An eloquent illustration of this is afforded by the following incident.

General Dzhunkovski, Vice-Minister of the Interior, wishing to confront the Empress with clear proof that the stories of Rasputin's revolting behaviour were only too true, showed her some photographs taken during one of his lewd orgies in a St. Petersburg restaurant. On seeing this incontrovertible evidence the Empress was terribly indignant, and ordered immediate and searching inquiries to be made regarding the identity of the person who had dared to sully Rasputin's reputation by posing as the *starets*.

At a time when patriotic Russians were in despair at their failure to destroy the root of evil, the German party – having in the *starets* such a valuable assistant – naturally triumphed.

Already at the outbreak of the war Rasputin

was almost at the summit of his influence and power. During the period that followed, honourable and devoted servants of the Crown were one by one dismissed, even those who were on terms of personal friendship with the Emperor himself; and their places were filled by Rasputin's nominees.

Meanwhile, innumerable lives were lost at the front. With magnificent, unheard-of heroism, the Russian troops went submissively to their death.

Spread over a vast front of some thousands of *versts*, they were fighting under conditions which no other soldiers in the world could have endured. Beset by terrible frosts, often deprived of all rations, they held the snow-filled trenches, never dreaming of retreat. Certain sections, owing to shortage of ammunition, fell under the enemy's fire without ever being able to reply. Whole regiments endeavoured to repulse attacks with their bare fists. Others went over the top armed only with sticks and stones.

The Russian army did not 'grouse;' it knew neither fatigue nor the fear of death, whether in defending its own territories or in sacrificing itself in support of its allies.

For instance, before the Battle of the Marne, the whole army of General Samsonov, with full knowledge that it was going to certain death, broke into Eastern Prussia, in order to draw part of the enemy forces from the French to the Russian front. The Germans, alarmed at this unexpected advance, reduced their forces on the Western front. The French gained a victory; but the Russian troops in Eastern Prussia were sacrificed in order to ensure it.

Russia felt these sacrifices. She felt how the life-blood flowed from her, the blood of her best and bravest, who were gladly dying for their country and for the common cause.

The people became doubly anxious. Was everything possible being done for the army? Were those at the base, to whom was entrusted the responsibility of supplying and arming the troops, conscientiously carrying out their duty? There were rumours of peculation and even treachery.

As soon as the Emperor, thanks to Rasputin's intrigues, had transferred the Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich to the Caucasian front, and had himself assumed the supreme command, the *starets* began to be an almost daily visitor at

Tsarskoe Selo, where he gave his advice on affairs of State. His meetings with the Empress usually took place in Vyrubova's house.

Not a single important event at the front was decided without a preliminary conference with the *starets*. From Tsarskoe Selo instructions were given to General Headquarters on the direct telegraph line. The Empress insisted on being kept fully informed by the Emperor on the military and political situation. On receiving this information, sometimes secret and of the utmost importance, she would send for Rasputin, and confer with him. When it is remembered by whom Rasputin was surrounded, it ceases to be surprising that almost every one of our attacks was known to the Germans beforehand, and that they should have been aware of all plans and changes contemplated in military or political spheres.

Germany took the necessary measures to secure her victories and to prepare our destruction.

I decided to attach no particular importance to all the disturbing rumours which were rife, but first of all to obtain irrefutable evidence of Rasputin's treason.

My opportunities for this reconnaissance could not have been more favourable.

The G.'s were at that time living on the Moika, next to the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich's palace, into which I had moved pending the completion of alterations in our own house.

As I have already said, M. and I were very old friends. She often invited me to visit her, but I seldom went, for I had no desire to enter the sphere of Rasputin's influence, still less to have my name connected with those of his friends who constantly gathered at her mother's house.

Now, however, since I was bent on completely unravelling the mystery of Rasputin's character and actions by means of a closer acquaintanceship with him, I decided to take advantage of M.'s invitations.

Incidentally, it was interesting to discuss in detail with M. herself the state of affairs in Russia. Knowing her blind adoration of Rasputin I could not, of course, attach any weight whatever to her views, but I knew that they were an exact reproduction of opinions held at Tsarskoe Selo.

I telephoned to her, to arrange a visit, and at the appointed hour I went to see her.

M. told me that Rasputin was constantly asking about me.

'He is very anxious to see you,' she said. 'He is coming here one of these days; I will let you know which.'

My further conversation with her convinced me that Rasputin still enjoyed the unlimited confidence of the Emperor and Empress, and continued to play the part of their most trusted adviser on political and family matters.

M. again sang his praises. Full of emotion, she told me how the *starets* humbly endured 'slander' and 'persecution,' and that by these unmerited sufferings he redeemed our sins.

Her enthusiasm prompted me to touch upon Rasputin's adventures.

'How do you explain this good man's habit of defiling his saintliness with drunken revels?'

M. was indignant. She blushed deeply and replied with some heat:

'You surely realise that all those tales are nothing but black and slanderous lies? He is surrounded by envy and malice. Evil-minded people invent charges and purposely distort facts, in order to blacken him, an innocent man, in the eyes of the Emperor and Empress. . . . It is all too terrible.'

'But,' I answered, 'you must be aware that

there are proofs in the shape of photographs and the tested evidence of witnesses, leaving no doubt whatever that he is by no means the holy man you make him out to be. . . . Why, for instance, should the gypsies be talking about his visits to them, his drinking and dancing with them? . . . Besides, many people have met him there. . . . And in the Villa Rodé restaurant, where he goes most of all, there is even a private room bearing his name. . . . How do you explain all that?'

'There you are! You talk like everyone else, and you believe it!' exclaimed M. indignantly. 'Remember that even if he does all these things, it is with a special purpose; he wants to harden himself morally; and by resisting temptation, to stamp out all baser desires.'

'And the ministers he appoints and dismisses? Is that also to stamp out desires, and to perfect his morality?' I asked, with a smile.

M. became angry at this, and said that she would complain about me to Grigori Efimovich.[1]

It made my heart ache to see the unfortunate girl's fanatical belief in the purity and infallibility of this disreputable adventurer. She would not accept my proofs of his depravity. Every

[1]Rasputin.

word of mine seemed as if shattered on the rock of her enslaved intelligence. I realised that she had lost the power of independent judgment, and that she dared not look upon her idol with a critical eye.

I then tried to make clear to her, from another point of view, the harm that his presence did to the Royal Family.

'Very well, then. We will assume, for the moment, that all this talk about his behaviour is pure invention. But you cannot ignore public opinion in Russia and throughout Europe. Both here and abroad Rasputin is regarded as a scoundrel and a spy. . . . His nearness to the Throne upsets the whole country and alarms our allies. . . . Is not that a sufficient reason for securing his removal from the presence of the Emperor and Empress?'

'Nobody has the right to criticise the actions of the Emperor and Empress. What they do concerns no one,' she replied hotly. 'They stand by themselves, above all public opinion.'

'And supposing,' I said, 'that Grigori Efimovich is an unconscious weapon in the hands of Russia's enemies, who carry out through him their criminal plans for the ruin of Russia – what

then? Would you, even under those conditions, still consider his presence useful at Tsarkoe Selo?

'And besides, you yourself have told me that Grigori Efimovich not only prays and speaks of religion with the Emperor and Empress, but that he also discusses with them the most important affairs of State. You know very well that not a single decision is taken without his approval, not a minister is appointed without his knowledge. Remember that whatever his spiritual qualities may be, good or bad, he is first and foremost an unenlightened and uneducated muzhik. Why, he can scarcely write. What can he understand about complicated questions of war, politics and internal administration? What advice can he give on these matters? And if he does give such advice, then there are obviously people behind him who are secretly directing him. You do not know these people or their aims. What right, then, have you to affirm that all the actions of Grigori Efimovich are good and helpful?

'Again I tell you, the proximity to the Throne of a man with such a terrible reputation undermines the authority of the Tsar everywhere. Dissatisfaction grows, indignation is universal, and if those at the head of the State do not realise

this, events may happen which will overthrow everything.'

M. looked at me with a pitying expression, as if I were an innocent child, and in answer to my impassioned speech, said :

'You talk like this simply because you do not know or understand Grigori Efimovich. Get to know him better, and if he takes a liking to you, then you yourself will become convinced of his exceptional and wonderful qualities. He cannot be mistaken in people. God Himself has given him such perspicacity that just by looking at a person he can immediately read his thoughts. That is why he is loved at Tsarskoe Selo; and of course they trust him in everything. He helps the Emperor and Empress to discern every person's character; he protects them from fraud, from every dangerous influence. . . . If it were not for Grigori Efimovich, everything would have been ruined long ago !' she concluded, in a tone of absolute conviction.

I put an end to this fruitless conversation. I said good-bye and went away.

On reaching home, I began to turn over in my mind my future course of action. This discussion only served to strengthen my conviction

that it was impossible to fight against Rasputin's influence with mere words. Logic was of no avail. The clearest arguments would not convince those whose judgment was clouded.

I realised that no more time must be wasted in talk; it was necessary to take action, deliberately and with energy, while all was not yet lost.

CHAPTER IV

THE RESOLVE TO DO AWAY WITH THE *starets*

I DECIDED to consult certain influential people and to tell them all I knew of Rasputin's doings. The impressions that I carried away from these conversations were very discouraging.

In the past I had so often heard them denounce Rasputin in the most bitter terms, attributing to him all our evils and misfortunes, and maintaining that, if it were not for him, the position might still be saved. But when I suggested that it was time to pass from words to deeds, I was told that his importance at Tsarskoe Selo had been greatly exaggerated by empty rumours.

I do not know whether their evasive attitude was dictated by their fear of losing their posts, or whether they light-heartedly hoped that nothing terrible would happen, and that time would put everything right. But in either case I was astonished at the absence of any alarm for the country's fate. It was clear that their addiction to a quiet life, and an eager desire for their own welfare, impelled them to avoid any kind of decisive action which would necessitate departure from the beaten track. I think they were all convinced

of one thing; that the old order of things would in any case remain unchanged. They relied on this order, as if it were as firm as a rock; and the rest – whether their country would emerge victorious from this terrible war, whether all the blood poured out by Russians would be spilt in vain, whether a disastrous defeat would be the tragic end of the nation's enthusiasm – did not worry them overmuch.

Least of all were they capable of realising that an appalling catastrophe was drawing nearer and nearer, and had already assumed definite shape.

True, I did meet certain people who shared my fears; but they were powerless to help me. One of them, an elderly man who held a responsible post at the time, said to me: 'My dear fellow, what can one do, when the entire Government, and those who are in close contact with the Emperor, are, without exception, Rasputin's nominees?

'The only way out is . . . to kill the blackguard. But unfortunately there isn't a man in Russia to do that. . . . If I were not so old I'd do it myself. . . .'

When I saw that there was no help forthcoming from any direction, I decided to act independently.

No matter what I was doing, no matter to whom I was talking, I was haunted by one persistent idea, the idea of delivering Russia from her most dangerous internal enemy.

I would often awake in the middle of the night, and pace up and down the room.

How can one kill a man, and deliberately plan his murder?

The thought oppressed and tormented me. . . . Until a voice within me said:

'Every murder is a crime and a sin, but in the name of your country you must take this sin on your conscience. You must take it without faltering. At the front, millions of innocent men have been killed. . . . While here there is only one man who must die, and of all the enemies of your country, he is the most pernicious, the most cynical, the most vile. By his abominable deceit he has made the Russian Throne his fortress, and no one has power to drive him forth. . . . Come what will, you must destroy him. . . .'

All my doubts and hesitations vanished. I felt a calm resolution, and gave myself over to the set purpose of destroying Rasputin. The idea took deep and firm root in my mind, and guided all my subsequent actions.

CHAPTER V

MY INQUIRIES

I MENTALLY ran through the list of those of my friends to whom I could entrust my secret, and chose two. They were the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich and Captain Sukhotin.

The Grand Duke was at G.H.Q., but he was soon to arrive in St. Petersburg. Captain Sukhotin, who was undergoing treatment for wounds received in action, I saw almost daily. I decided not to delay any longer, but to confer with him at once. I outlined my plan in general terms, and asked him if he wished to take part in carrying it out. He consented without the slightest hesitation, telling me that he agreed with my views and shared my fears.

On the same day the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich arrived from G.H.Q. As soon as I had returned home from my visit to Sukhotin, I telephoned to the Grand Duke, and arranged to call and see him at five o'clock that afternoon.

I was sure that he would support me, and be willing to take part in the fulfilment of my plan. I knew how he detested Rasputin, and how deeply he felt for the Emperor and Russia. For very

many reasons I attributed great importance to his participation in the plot.

I realised the necessity of being prepared for the most distressing possibilities, the most fateful issues; but I was buoyed up by the hope that the destruction of Rasputin would save the Tsar's family, and that the Emperor, roused from the spell which had been cast on him, would lead the country to a decisive victory, at the head of his united people.

The crucial moment of the war was drawing near. In the spring of 1917, the Allies proposed to launch a general attack on all fronts. Russia was energetically preparing her army for this move. But a purely technical preparation on the front and at the base was insufficient to inflict a decisive blow on the enemy. It was essential that there should be a strong feeling of unanimity between the Supreme Power and the people.

Yet the shadow of Rasputin continued to hang like a cloud over G.H.Q. and St. Petersburg.

Needless to say, Germany was not slumbering. While putting down barbed-wire entanglements in front of her lines, she was busy weaving her terrible nets within Russia herself.

Germany had made a close study of the internal situation in Russia for many years before the war. At the time when the Kaiser Wilhelm, foreseeing the inevitability of a general European war, was making every effort to bring about a Russo-German alliance, he warned the Emperor Nicholas against Rasputin and advised him to see no more of this dangerous and pernicious man. The German Emperor realised that Rasputin's proximity to the Throne compromised not only the Russian Tsar but monarchy as a whole. After the proposals for alliance had been rejected, however, and especially after war had been declared, the Kaiser made very adroit use of Rasputin's influence. The German General Staff, all unseen, held him in their hands, by means of money and the most subtle intrigues. Simultaneously the Germans exerted every effort to provoke a revolution in Russia; they sent their agents into our midst, and gave all kinds of support to revolutionary organisations abroad which were constantly preparing the ground and watching the moment for an attack.

In point of fact, the Germans had counted on a Russian revolution before August, 1914. There were persistent reports that just before war was

declared, Count Pourtalès, the German Ambassador in St. Petersburg, had informed his Government, in a telegram which had been intercepted and deciphered, that the most favourable moment for hostilities had arrived, since Russia was on the brink of revolution. The contents of the telegram made it quite clear, moreover, that Germany had sent into Russia huge sums of money for propaganda.

In the earlier phases of the war, the great patriotic response of the Russian people upset these calculations. The Germans began to make suggestions for a separate peace; but they none the less continued their revolutionary propaganda.

I was looking forward with impatience to my meeting with the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich; and at the appointed hour I went to the palace.

I found him alone in his study and at once proceeded to tell him what I had in mind.

I gave him my views in detail on the situation, told him of my intentions, and asked him whether he would be ready to co-operate with me.

As I had expected, he at once agreed, saying that in his opinion Rasputin's death was the only effective means that remained of saving Russia from imminent disaster. He told me that he had

long been tormented by the necessity of settling accounts with the *starets*, but that he had not been able to conceive how this could be done.

In the course of our conversation I gave the Grand Duke an account of my talk with M. He was not in the least surprised, as he was well aware of the attitude which prevailed at Tsarskoe Selo.

He had to return to G.H.Q. in a few days' time.

He told me that his stay there would probably be a short one, as he was not liked there, and his influence was feared. He added that, Voeikov[1] made every effort to keep him away from the Emperor, who was completely in his hands.

He then gave me his views of what was going on at G.H.Q. He had noticed that there was something wrong with the Emperor; every day he became more indifferent to his surroundings, and to the course of events.

'In my opinion,' he concluded, 'that is all part of some evil plot. I am almost sure that he is being given drugs which obscure his intelligence and weaken his will-power. . . . All this is terrible . . . it's a nightmare.'

[1]General Voeikov, the Commandant of the Palace.

At this point our conversation was interrupted by the arrival of guests, and we had to postpone it.

But we had arranged that by the time he next returned from G.H.Q. – he expected it would be between the 10th and the 15th of December – I should work out a detailed plan for Rasputin's destruction, and prepare everything for its fulfilment.

On this we parted; everything, in principle, was settled.

I returned home, moved by strange feelings. The idea which had so disturbed and tormented me had now begun to pass from the realm of my own thoughts into reality. Not so very long ago it had overwhelmed me like some confused delirium. But now I was no longer alone; I had adherents, friends with me. Everything was now decided, everything clear. And I felt an immense spiritual relief.

In the evening Sukhotin came to see me.

I told him of my conversation with the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich, and we settled down to discuss our plan of action.

It was decided that first of all I should get into close touch with Rasputin, obtain his confidence, and try to learn from his own lips as many details

as possible concerning his participation in political events.

Afterwards, we intended to try our utmost – not by extreme measures, but by peaceful persuasion or by the promise of large sums of money – to sever his connection with Tsarskoe Selo.

If these attempts should meet with complete failure, it only remained for us to destroy the criminal *starets*.

At this point the question arose, how and where should we carry out this sentence on him?

I suggested that the three of us should draw lots; and that whoever was chosen by destiny should contrive an entrance into Rasputin's flat, and shoot him there.

CHAPTER VI

RASPUTIN AMONG HIS FEMALE ADMIRERS

A few days later, M. said to me on the telephone :

'Grigori Efimovich is coming to see us tomorrow. He very much wants to meet you. We both insist on your coming too.'

I shuddered on receiving this invitation. The means of pursuing my design was presenting itself of its own accord, but in adopting it I was forced to deceive one who was genuinely attached to me. M. could not suspect my reasons for keeping up an acquaintance with Rasputin; she should on no account suspect them.

But having arrived at a definite decision I could not and would not go back on it.

When I entered the G.s' drawing-room on the following day, I found M. and her mother there.

They had long cherished the hope that Rasputin and I would become friends; and they were clearly agitated at the prospect of our second meeting.

He arrived very soon afterwards.

He had changed a great deal since we first met.

The environment in which this muzhik was now living, cut off from the healthy physical

labour which was natural to him, sunk in absolute sloth and spending his nights carousing, seemed to have laid its inevitable mark on him.

His face was puffy, his form seemed to have become lax and flabby. He was no longer clad in an ordinary peasant's coat, but in a blouse of pale blue silk, and wide velvet trousers. There was something extraordinarily repugnant about his whole appearance. Yet he seemed very much at ease.

As soon as he caught sight of me he screwed up his eyes and smiled sweetly, saying how glad he was to meet me. He hurried towards me and embraced me. His touch sickened me, but I controlled myself and made a show of being very pleased to see him.

I noticed that with M. and her mother his manner was even more familiar than before. He clapped them on the shoulder or on the back, and did not even deign to answer when they asked him to sit down and take tea.

He seemed preoccupied that day. He paced restlessly up and down the room, and several times asked M. whether there had been no telephone message for him.

He eventually sat down beside me and began

to ask questions. What was I doing? Where was I serving? Should I soon be going to the front? His patronising tone exasperated me, but I had to appear amiable and humour him.

M. followed our conversation with the deepest attention.

When he had completely satisfied his curiosity about me, he reeled off a series of disjointed and meaningless phrases about God and love for one's neighbour. I tried to grasp his meaning, in the hope of discovering something original, or eccentric. But the more I listened the more convinced I became that he was using exactly the same expressions as at our first meeting, four years before.

As I listened to his senseless mumblings, I watched the reverent and attentive faces of his admirers, who seemed fearful of missing a single syllable of his disjointed 'sermon.' To them, of course, it seemed to hold a profound and hidden meaning.

Into what depth of mental and moral abjection, I thought, can people sink. Here is this impudent scoundrel shamelessly hoaxing them – and they don't want to be undeceived. That's just it; they don't want to be undeceived. They are

pleasantly intoxicated with his narcotic suggestions. An ignorant muzhik sprawling in armchairs, spouting forth the first words that come into his head, is something new for them, something unexpected; it excites their nerves, fills up their time, and perhaps even induces in them a state of hysterical ecstasy. . . . And this muzhik is not only playing on feminine weakness; he is fooling the whole country; he is juggling with the fate of millions of people, and leading to disaster all Russia and her unfortunate Tsar.

I remembered my conversation with the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich concerning the drugs with which the Emperor's faculties were being deliberately undermined. . . . Incidentally, he was not the only person who had told me about those stupefying Tibetan herbs.

Rasputin was on very friendly terms with a certain Badmaev who was living in St. Petersburg at that time. Badmaev, who hailed from Tibet, gave himself out to be a fully qualified doctor, but he had not fulfilled the requirements which Russian law imposes on medical practitioners. He treated patients in secret; and as he demanded large fees both for his advice and for his medicines – which by the way, he prepared

himself[1] he had succeeded in amassing a considerable fortune. On several occasions he had been charged with the criminal offence of quackery, but in spite of that he remained in St. Petersburg and continued his surreptitious treatment of those credulous people who consulted him.

Whether Badmaev was really one of the true Tibetan 'Lamas,' versed in all the secrets of Tibetan medical lore – which is based on centuries-old study of the properties of various herbs – or whether he was merely an astûte charlatan with a superficial knowledge of medicine as practised in his country, it is difficult to say. His mode of life showed him to be a typical adventurer of the lowest grade, in search of money and prominence.

He was on very good terms with the dregs of the political underworld in St. Petersburg, such as the notorious journalist and sharper, Manusevich Manuilov, and Prince M. M. Andronikov, whose shady intrigues and swindles were completely exposed after the revolution.

Badmaev strove by every means in his power to gain influence in political spheres, and as soon as Rasputin began to play à prominent *rôle* at

[1]It is not the custom in Russia for medical practitioners to dispense for their patients.

Tsarskoe Selo, the Tibetan adventurer lost no time in making his acquaintance and forming the closest of friendships with him.

Rasputin's doctoring of the Emperor and Tsetsarevich with various herbs was, of course, performed with the aid of Badmaev, who was undoubtedly familiar with many remedies unknown to European science.

The sinister Tibetan and the still more sinister *starets* . . . it was indeed a formidable alliance.

These were my thoughts as I watched Rasputin's easy and confident postures; and I felt that nothing now could arrest my purpose.

In the meantime, his conversation – or, to be more exact, his monologue – continued.

His religious vapourings gave way to a theme more directly concerned with himself. He began to enlarge on 'the unjust attitude of people who were ill-disposed towards him' – people who spent their whole time in slandering him, and in trying to blacken him in the eyes of the Emperor and Empress. He volunteered his conviction that he was a *porte-bonheur*, and that all who were on friendly terms with him were pleasing in the sight of God, whereas those who opposed him were always punished.

I had more than once heard him boast of possessing the gift of healing, and I had come to the conclusion that the easiest way of approaching him would be for me to ask him to treat me. I told him that for many years I had been in the hands of various doctors, but that none of them had given me permanent relief.

'I'll cure you,' said Rasputin, after he had listened with the greatest attention to the tale of my illnesses and the various cures that I had tried. 'I'll cure you . . . Doctors? – They don't know anything. All they do is to stuff you with medicine – anything will do. . . . And you only get worse. But I know better than that, my dear. With me everybody gets well. I heal in God's way, and in God's name. There's no trash with me. You wait! You'll see for yourself. . . .'

Just then the telephone-bell rang. Rasputin stopped talking. He was obviously excited.

'I expect that's for me,' he said – and then addressing M. as if she were his servant – 'Go and see,' he commanded.

M. got up and obeyed him. She did not seem to be in the least put out by his tone.

As a matter of fact, it really was a telephone message for Rasputin. It was only a short con-

versation, and he looked glum and ill at ease when he returned to us. . . . He took his leave in silence, and hurried away.

This second meeting with him left me in a rather doubtful frame of mind.

I decided that I would not seek an opportunity of meeting him again, for the time being; I would wait until he himself expressed a desire to see me.

On the evening of that same day I received a note from M., in which she begged me, on Rasputin's behalf, to forgive him for interrupting our conversation by his unexpected departure, and invited me to call on her on the following day at the same hour. She further asked me, at the request of the *starets*, to bring my guitar with me; he was very fond of gypsy songs, and having learnt that I sang, had expressed his desire to hear me.

I saw that I had interested him, and that he wanted to get into closer touch with me.

I no longer hesitated to go to the G.s', for I attached great importance to my next meeting with the *starets*.

I made my way there at the appointed hour, taking my guitar with me. As on the first occasion, I got there before Rasputin had arrived.

I took advantage of this to ask M. why he had left so suddenly the day before.

'He was told that an important matter had taken an undesirable turn,' she replied. 'But now, thank Heaven! everything is arranged. Grigori Efimovich got angry, and shouted at them; and they took fright and gave in to him.'

'Where did this happen?' I asked.

M. was silent. I saw she did not want to answer.

'At Tsarskoe,' she said at last, very reluctantly. 'I won't tell you anything more. You'll soon hear for yourself.'

Shortly afterwards I discovered that the matter which had so upset Rasputin was the appointment of Protopopov to be Minister of the Interior.

Rasputin's party wished at all costs to carry this appointment through; but the Emperor would not consent to it. Rasputin, however, had only to go to Tsarskoe, and – as M. had put it – 'to get angry and shout at them,' for everything to be done as he wished.

'Do you also take part in the appointment of Ministers?' I asked M.

She blushed, and said, with some embarrassment:

'We all help Grigori Efimovich as much as we

can, whenever occasion arises. After all, it is difficult for him to manage alone; he has so much to do – he must have assistance.'

In the midst of these explanations Rasputin arrived. He was talkative and in excellent humour.

'Forgive me, my dear, for yesterday,' he said to me. 'These things can't be helped. . . . Bad people have to be punished, and so many of them have sprung up lately.' And turning to M. he continued: 'I've put everything straight. I had to go down there myself. The first person I ran into was Annushka.[1] All she could do was to whimper and whine. "It hasn't come off," says she. "You are the only hope, Grigori Efimovich. Thank God you've come!" '

'I went in. I saw that "she"[2] was angry and sulky, while "he"[3] was pacing the room. But after I'd shouted a bit they calmed down. As soon as I threatened to go straight off and have done with 'em, they gave in completely.

'Somebody had said to them, "This is all wrong, and that's all wrong." What do "they" understand about it all?'

[1] Madame Vyrubova.
[2] The Empress.
[3] The Emperor.

'If they'd only pay more attention to me! I know he's[1] a good man and believes in God, and that's all that matters.'

Rasputin glanced at us all in his confident and self-satisfied way, and turned to M.

'Now let's have some tea! Why aren't you looking after us?'

We went into the dining-room. M. poured out tea for us, offering Rasputin every imaginable kind of sweetmeat and pastry.

'There's a dear, kind girl for you,' he said to me. 'She always thinks of me, and gets what I like. . . . Have you brought your guitar?'

'Yes, I have it here.'

'Well, sing us something, and we'll sit and listen.'

It cost me a great effort to force myself to sing before him, but I took the guitar and sang a few gypsy songs.

'How well you sing!' he approved. 'You put your soul into it . . . lots of soul. Give us some more!'

So I sang a few more, some sad and some gay, and after each one Rasputin pressed me to go on. At last I finished.

'Then you like my singing?' I said to him. 'But

[1] M. Protopopov.

if you only knew how depressed I feel! I have plenty of energy. I long to work hard, yet I can't. I so soon get tired and ill.'

'I'll cure you in no time,' he answered. 'Just you come to the gypsies with me, and we'll soon have done with this illness of yours.'

'I've been,' I said, with a smile, 'but somehow it didn't seem to do any good.'

Rasputin laughed.

'Ah, but it's quite a different thing to go with me, my dear . . . it's much more amusing with me . . . everything's much better!' And he began to tell us, with full details, how he spent his time singing and dancing with the gypsies.

M. and her mother showed surprise and embarrassment at such candour from the 'holy' *starets*.

'Don't you believe him!' they said. 'He's just making fun of us; he's running himself down on purpose.'

This attempt to protect his reputation made him very angry. He banged on the table with his fist, and spoke to them so sharply that both mother and daughter at once became mute.

He turned to me again.

'Well, what about it? Coming with me? I'll

cure you, I tell you . . . you'll see for yourself. I'll cure you, and you'll feel grateful for it. . . .' Yes, and we'll take her along with us too,' he said, pointing to the daughter.

M. blushed crimson. Her mother, in confusion, began to reproach him.

'Grigori Efimovich, what is the matter with you? Why do you slander yourself, and drag my daughter into it as well? What should she be doing there? She comes to you for prayer, and you want to take her to the gypsies! That's not the way to talk.'

'What!' said Rasputin, glaring angrily at her, 'you know quite well that anybody can go anywhere with me; there's no sin in that. What are you cackling about?'

'My dear,' he said, turning to me again, 'don't you listen to her. Do as I say, and everything will be all right.'

His proposal to visit the gypsies did not suit me at all; but I could not refuse outright, so I gave him an evasive answer, reminding him that I was in the *Corps des Pages*,[1] and could not, therefore, frequent such places.

But Rasputin insisted, assuring me that he

[1] A military school in St. Petersburg.

could disguise me so that no one would recognise me, and that nobody would be any the wiser.

I still refused to pledge myself; but I promised to telephone to him later on in the evening.

There was no doubt that I had aroused his interest, for at our parting he patted me on the shoulder and said:

'I want to see more of you . . . much more of you. Come and have tea with me one day – only let me know beforehand. . . .'

CHAPTER VII

A VISIT TO THE STARETS

On arriving home I found Captain Sukhotin eagerly awaiting my return from the G.s'.

My second meeting with Rasputin had encouraged me in the hope that my acquaintance with him would eventually become sufficiently close to enable us to carry out our design. But what it cost me to attain our object by such means!

My meetings with him left me with an overpowering feeling of contamination; all this worship of a coarse and insolent muzhik by his hysterical female admirers seemed so monstrous.

Incidentally, in my last conversation with him I had been unpleasantly surprised at Rasputin's suggestion to M. that she should join in his carousals. I could not shake off the depressing feeling that there might be no limit to the influence of this scoundrel, or to the subjection of those weak characters upon whom it was exercised: was he capable of sparing the purity and innocence of an unreasoning faith in him?

That evening I telephoned to the *starets* and him that I could not go with him to the gypsies, as

on the following day I was down for an examination at the *Corps des Pages*.

Preparation for these examinations really did take up a great deal of my time, and I did not meet Rasputin again for a considerable period.

One day, as I was driving past the G s' house, I met M. She stopped me, and said

'You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Grigori Efimovich has been waiting all this time for you to go and see him, and you have completely forgotten him! But if you look him up he will forgive you! I am going to visit him tomorrow. Shall we go together?'

I fell in with her suggestion.

On the following day, at the appointed hour, I drove over to call for M. I was still uneasy at the thought of her visiting the gypsies in company with Rasputin, and I wondered what she would answer if I asked her point-blank whether she would do so.

When we had settled ourselves in the car I said to her:

'What am I to understand by Grigori Efimovich's offer to take you with us to the gypsies at Novaya Derevnya?[1] What does he mean?'

[1]The Gypsies' settlement in St Petersburg.

M. became confused, and did not give me a direct answer. I felt that conversation on this subject was extremely unpleasant to her, and I refrained from pursuing it.

When we reached the Fontanka my companion asked me to stop the car, and to tell the chauffeur to wait for us round the corner. It was not possible, she explained, to visit Rasputin openly. He was guarded by the secret police, who kept a record of his visitors. M. knew how intensely my family disliked the *starets*, and spared no effort to keep my relations with him secret.

We arrived, on foot, at the front entrance to No. 64 Gorokhovaya Street, crossed the courtyard, and went up to Rasputin's flat by the back staircase.

On the way M. told me that the guard was stationed on the main staircase, and that it comprised men appointed by the Prime Minister himself, as well as by the Minister of the Interior and even by certain banks – she did not know exactly which.

She rang the bell.

Rasputin himself opened the door, which was carefully locked and chained.

We found ourselves in a small kitchen, crammed

with baskets and boxes, and all sorts of stores and provisions.

A young girl was seated near the window. She was thin and pale, with a strange, wandering look in her big dark eyes.

Rasputin was dressed in a light-blue silk blouse embroidered with wild flowers, and in loose trousers tucked into his long boots. As soon as he caught sight of me he said:

'You've come at last! I was beginning to get angry with you. Here I've been waiting I don't know how many days, and never a sign of you.'

We left the kitchen and went into his bedroom. It was small and simply furnished. In one corner, along the wall, there was a narrow bed; on it lay a cover of fox fur—a present from Vyrubova. Near by, there was a huge chest. In the opposite corner hung *ikons*, with lamps burning in front of them. Here and there on the walls were portraits of the Tsar and of the Tsaritsa, and gaudy coloured prints depicting scenes from the Holy Scriptures.

From the bedroom Rasputin took us into the dining-room, where tea was laid out.

The *samovar* was already boiling. On the table

were glass dishes of jam and fruits, and quantities of plates filled with cakes, biscuits, sweets and nuts. In the middle stood a basket of flowers.

The furniture was of massive oak – high-backed chairs, and a cumbersome sideboard loaded with crockery. Paintings, badly executed in oils, adorned the walls; over the table hung a bronze chandelier with a large glass shade. There was a telephone near the door leading to the hall.

The whole contents of the flat, from the cumbersome sideboard to the crowded and abundantly stocked kitchen, bore the stamp of *bourgeois* wellbeing and prosperity. The lithdgraphs and badly-painted pictures on the walls were fully in keeping with the owner's taste.

The dining-room obviously served as Rasputin's reception-room, in which he spent the greater part of his time when at home.

We sat down at the table, and Rasputin served us with tea.

Conversation hung fire at first. I felt that the *starets* was in a suspicious mood. Or perhaps he was put out by the continual ringing of the telephone bell, which constantly interrupted our conversation.

M. was very restless. She kept getting up

from the table, moving away from it, and returning to her seat.

The telephone was not the only source of interruption. Rasputin was several times called away to an adjoining room serving as his study, where people awaited him with various requests. All these calls on his patience irritated him. He was nervous and ill-humoured.

During one of his temporary absences from the dining-room a huge basket of flowers, with a note pinned to it, was brought in.

'Are these really for Grigori Efimovich?' I asked M.

She nodded, by way of assent.

At that moment Rasputin returned. He took no notice of the gift, but sat down next to me and poured out tea.

'Grigori Efimovich,' I said to him, 'people bring flowers to you just as if you were a *prima donna!*'

He laughed.

'Idiots. . . . They can't leave me alone. They bring fresh flowers every day; they know I love 'em.'

'Eh! you,' he said, turning to M., 'go into the other room; I'm going to have a chat with him.'

M. meekly got up and went out.

As soon as we were alone Rasputin moved closer to me and took my hand.

'Well, my dear,' he said, in a caressing tone, 'do you like my flat? Does it appeal to you? Well, mind you come more often. . . . You'll be all the better for it.'

He stroked my arm and steadily looked me in the eyes.

'Don't be afraid of me,' he said insinuatingly. 'When you know me better, you'll see what sort of a man I am. . . . I can do anything. . . . If the Tsar and Tsaritsa obey *me*, surely you can . . . I shall be seeing them soon, and I'll tell them that you've been to tea with me here. . . . It'll please 'em.'

This idea did not appeal to me in the least. I knew that the Empress would immediately tell Vyrubova – who would at once look upon my 'friendship' with the *starets* with extreme suspicion, for she had on several occasions heard me refer to him in the most candid and disapproving terms.

'No, Grigori Efimovich,' I said, 'don't say anything about me at Tsarskoe Selo. The less people know about my being here the better. Otherwise there will be gossip. It might get to

the ears of my family, and I can't bear any sort of domestic scene or unpleasantness.'

Rasputin agreed, and promised to say nothing.

Our conversation then turned on politics. He began to criticise the Duma.

'They're always speaking ill of me there, and the Emperor gets upset. . . . Well, anyway, their babblings won't last much longer. I'll dissolve the Duma soon, and send all the deputies to the front. . . . I'll show 'em! . . . Perhaps they'll remember me then.'

'Grigori Efimovich, can you really dissolve the Duma? How?'

'Oh! That's a simple matter, my dear. Just you get to know me better, and help me, and then you'll learn all about it. . . . But I'll tell you this here and now. The Empress is a very wise ruler. . . . With her I can do anything, I can get whatever I like. But as for him – well, he's a child of God. There's an Emperor for you! Why, he ought just to play with children and flowers, and get busy in a vegetable garden – not rule the country; that's a bit difficult for him, and so we help him, with God's blessing.'

It made me writhe to hear the supercilious disdain with which this conceited muzhik-horse-

thief spoke of the Emperor of Russia. But I controlled myself, and very quietly suggested to Rasputin that perhaps he himself was sometimes deceived by those who surrounded him; he could not always, perhaps, be sure whether they were giving him good or bad advice in their attempts to attain their ends through his influence at Tsarskoe Selo.

'How can you know, Grigori Efimovich, what these various people are trying to get out of you, and what objects they have in view? They might be just using you as a pawn for their own foul purposes.'

Rasputin smiled indulgently.

'D'you want to teach God what to do? It wasn't for nothing that He sent me to help His anointed. . . . I tell you they'd be completely lost without me. I don't beat about the bush with them. If they don't do what I tell them I just bang the table with my fist and get up and go; and then they chase after me and start begging: "Don't go away, Grigori Efimovich; we'll obey you in everything if you will only stay with us. . . ." So there you are, my dear; you see how they love and respect me.

'The other day,' he continued, 'I told them that

a certain man must be given a post, but they kept putting it off. So at last I threatened to leave 'em. "Very well," says I, "I'll go off to Siberia; and then you'll all rot away, and you'll be causing the death of your boy. If you turn your back on God you'll face the Devil." That's how it's done, my dear. Yet there are all sorts of puppets swarming around Tsarskoe Selo, whispering to them that Grigori Efimovich is a bad man who wishes them evil. . . . Why should I? They are good and God-fearing people.'

'But, Grigori Efimovich, it is not enough that the Emperor and Empress love you,' I said. 'You surely know what evil things people say of you? And their stories are believed not only in Russia, but abroad also. They write about you in the newspapers there. . . . And if you really do love the Emperor and Empress, then I think you ought to leave them and go back to your home in Siberia for good. . . . Otherwise, you may some day meet with sudden violence; and what will happen then?'

'No, my dear, you know nothing about it, or you wouldn't be talking like that,' answered Rasputin. 'The Lord wouldn't allow that to happen. If it was His will to bring us together, it

means that it was necessary. And as to what these puppets say, or what they write in foreign newspapers, I spit on 'em. Let 'em talk. They'll only ruin themselves.'

Rasputin got up and began to pace up and down the room with nervous steps.

I watched him closely. He was morose and preoccupied.

Suddenly he wheeled round and came up to me. He bent over me, and with his face close to mine, stared me fixedly in the eyes.

I was harrowed by his gaze. There seemed to be an immense power behind it.

Without taking his eyes off mine, he stroked my back, and with a crafty smile asked me, in a soft and insinuating voice, whether I would like some wine. I assented. He produced a bottle of madeira and, pouring out a glass for himself and one for me, drank my health.

'When will you come here again?' he asked.

But at that moment M. came in, and reminded him that it was time for him to go to Tsarskoe Selo, and that the car was waiting.

'Here I've been chatting away, forgetting that they were waiting for me. Well, never mind; it isn't the first time. Sometimes they telephone

and telephone, and send for me; but I don't go straight away. . . . I just arrive unexpectedly, and you should see how glad they are. They appreciate me all the more.'

He turned to me and said: 'Well, good-bye, my dear.' Then glancing at M., he said, pointing to me, 'He's got brains. He'll go a long way, if his mind doesn't get warped. . . . If he'll only listen to me . . . all will be well. Isn't that the truth? . . . Well, you just explain things to him, so that he thoroughly understands. Good-bye, good-bye! Come again soon. . . .' And he embraced me.

After his departure, M. and I left by the same back way by which we had entered. Coming out on the Gorokhovaya, we proceeded towards the Fontanka, where the car was awaiting us.

On the way home, M. again confided to me her feelings for Rasputin.

'Isn't it nice at Grigori Efimovich's? Don't you find that in his presence you forget everything worldly?' she said. 'He seems to bring such wonderful calm to your soul.'

I was forced to agree with her; but I added:

'I think, you know, that Grigori Efimovich ought to leave St. Petersburg as soon as possible.'

'Why?' she asked.

'Because otherwise it will end by his being killed I am quite convinced of this, and I advise you to do everything in your power to influence him in that direction. It is essential that he should go away.'

'No! No!' she exclaimed, terror-stricken. 'That can never happen. . . . God will not take him from us! Don't you realise that he is our only consolation and support? If he were no longer with us, everything would be lost. The Empress believes that as long as Grigori Efimovich is there, no harm can come to the Tsetsarevich; but that as soon as he goes away, her son will inevitably fall ill. This has already happened, on more than one occasion; and Grigori Efimovich has had to come back. And the strange thing is, that as soon as he did come back, the boy began to get better.

'Grigori Efimovich himself says: "If I am killed, the Tsetsarevich will not live: he is sure to die."

'There have already been a number of attempts on Grigori Efimovich's life, you know, and God has preserved him,' she continued. 'And now he is so careful and is so well guarded that we need not feel anxious about him.'

At that moment we arrived at the G.s' house.

'When shall I see you again?' asked M.

I suggested that she should ring me up after her next meeting with Rasputin, for I was most anxious to hear what impression my last conversation had made on him.

I thought over all that I had just heard, both from Rasputin himself and from M., and considered it side by side with our intention of removing the *starets* from the Tsar's family by peaceful means.

It had now become clear to me that there was no possible way of persuading him to leave St. Petersburg, never to return. He was too firmly established; he valued his position too highly. The strong guard which followed him everywhere gave him unwavering confidence in his absolute security. Money, with which he might otherwise have been tempted, was hardly likely to induce him to forego all those unlimited privileges which he enjoyed.

'Rasputin,' I thought, 'has plenty of means of obtaining all the money he wants for his carousing and drinking. Besides, it is quite possible that he has means of getting more wealth than we could offer him. . . . If he really is a German agent, or something of that kind, Germany will not

grudge him gold for her own advantages, for her own victory.'

I was forced to the conclusion that it would be necessary to resort to extreme measures in order to deliver Russia from this evil genius.

CHAPTER VIII

A HYPNOTIC SÉANCE

My work at the *Corps des Pages* left me few leisure hours. I would return home very tired; but there was no time for rest – I had to confront the task which we had set ourselves, and to take all the steps necessary for carrying it out.

The thought of Rasputin preyed on me like a disease. I could not dismiss him from my mind. I was impelled to consider from every point of view the decision we had taken, and to try to fathom the personality of the *starets* and his mysterious and forbidding influence.

I seemed to see a monstrous plot against Russia, and in the midst of it stood Rasputin, who, by the will of inexorable fate, had become a dangerous weapon in the hands of our enemies.

'Does he fully realise the meaning of it all?' I asked myself.

'No, of course not. He is incapable of understanding how complicated is the web in which he is entangled. He cannot realise the subtle and diabolical ingenuity of those who are directing his actions.'

An ignorant muzhik, hardly able to read and

write – there was much that he could not analyse or understand. His head had been turned by his unexpected success, and he had become more avaricious, more cynical, more unprincipled than ever.

His boundless influence in high places, the fawning adoration of hysterical women, his continual orgies, and a life of degenerate and unaccustomed ease, had extinguished in him the last sparks of conscience and deadened all fear of consequences. Cunning and extremely observant, he undoubtedly possessed great hypnotic power. On watching him closely, the least superstitious person would feel that there was something satanic in his powers.

More than once, when I have looked him in the eyes, I have felt that apart from all his vices he was possessed by some sort of demon, and that he often acted unconsciously, as if in a trance.

This frenzy invested certain of his words and actions with a peculiar authority; so that persons lacking in strength of mind and of will fell readily under his power. His position as the most trusted friend and counsellor of the Tsar's family increased his hypnotic influence, particularly over those who were inclined to be impressed by the halo of power which thus surrounded him.

But who were these unseen people who guided his actions, and who were able to exploit him so well for their own ends?

Their real aims and identity were probably all but unknown to him. He was generally very vague about people's identity, and he had the habit of giving everybody nicknames. Whenever he spoke of these mysterious persons he referred to them as 'zeleni'.[1] He had probably never even seen them, but communicated with them at third or even fourth hand.

He had once casually remarked to me: 'The "zeleni" live in Sweden; when you go there you shall meet them.'

'Are there any 'zeleni' in Russia?' I had asked.

'No, only "zelenenkie" – their friends and ours – and all of 'em clever people,' he had replied.

Such were my reflections on this mystery – which was probably much more complicated than he himself realised – while I was awaiting the promised telephone call from M.

She rang me up at last, and told me that Rasputin wanted me to go with him to the gypsies.

I had succeeded in resisting his first invitation,

[1] 'Zeleni' is the Russian for 'green.' 'Zelenenki' is the diminutive form of the same word.

and I hoped to be able to evade it again this time.

I proffered the same excuse – my examinations at the *Corps des Pages* – and added that if Grigori Efimovich wanted to see me I would go and take tea with him. We accordingly arranged that on the following day I should call for M. as before, and that we should go to Rasputin's flat together.

My second visit to the *starets* proved still more interesting than the first.

We were alone together almost the whole time.

He was particularly well-disposed towards me, and I reminded him of his promise to give me advice on the score of my health.

'I'll cure you in a few days. You just wait and see. Come into my study; nobody will interfere with us there. Let's have some tea first, and then with God's help we'll begin. I'll pray, and drive your illness out of you. You just listen to what I say, my dear, and all will be well.'

After tea he took me to his study. It was the first time I had seen it. It was a small room furnished with a couch and arm-chairs upholstered in leather, and an enormous writing-table littered with papers.

The *starets* told me to lie down on the couch. He stood in front of me, looked me intently in

the eyes and began to stroke my chest, neck and head. He then suddenly knelt down and – so it seemed to me – began to pray, placing his hands on my forehead. He bent his head so low that I could no longer see his face.

He remained in this position for a considerable time. Then he suddenly jumped to his feet and began to make passes. He was evidently familiar with certain of the processes employed by hypnotists.

His hypnotic power was immense. I felt it subduing me and diffusing warmth throughout the whole of my being. I grew numb; my body seemed paralysed. I tried to speak, but my tongue would not obey me, and I seemed to be falling asleep, as if under the influence of a strong narcotic. Yet Rasputin's eyes shone before me with a kind of phosphorescent light. From them came two rays which flowed into each other and merged into one glowing circle. This circle now moved away from me, now came nearer and nearer. When it approached me it seemed as if I began to distinguish his eyes; but at that very moment they would again vanish into the circle, which then moved further and further away.

I was conscious that the *starets* was speaking

but I could not make out his words; I could only hear a vague murmur.

Such was my condition as I lay motionless, unable to call out or stir. Yet my mind was still free, and I realised that I was gradually falling into the power of this mysterious and sinister man.

But soon I felt that my own inner force was awakening and was of its own accord resisting the hypnosis.

This force grew stronger within me, enveloping my whole being in an invisible armour. Into my consciousness floated a vague idea that an intense struggle was taking place between Rasputin and myself, and that my own personality in battling with his made it impossible for him to dominate me completely.

I tried to move my hand; and it obeyed me. But I did not alter my position; I waited until Rasputin himself should tell me to do so.

By now I could clearly distinguish his figure, face and eyes. That terrible circle had completely disappeared. . . .

'Well, my dear, that'll be enough for the first time,' he said.

He kept a close watch on me, but evidently

he was able to note only one aspect of my sensations; my resistance to the hypnosis had escaped him.

There was a self-satisfied smile on his face, and he spoke to me in the assured tone of a person conscious of his entire mastery over another. He was obviously convinced that I had been completely subjugated by him, and that he could henceforth count me among his submissive followers.

With a brusque movement he pulled my arm. I sat up, feeling dizzy and weak. With an effort, I rose from the couch and took a few steps about the room; but my legs seemed half-paralysed, and would not fully obey me.

Rasputin continued to observe every movement I made. 'This is God's grace,' he said. 'Now you'll see how soon it will heal you, and drive all your illness away.'

We parted, and he made me promise to visit him again very soon.

After this hypnotic *séance* I repeatedly went to him, sometimes with M., sometimes alone.

The 'treatment' continued, and his confidence in me grew day by day.

Sometimes we had long conversations together.

He looked upon me as his friend; he was firmly convinced of my belief in his divine mission, and counted on my unreserved co-operation and support. Hence he did not consider it necessary to weigh his words, and one by one he showed me all his cards. He had such faith in the strength of his influence that the idea did not even occur to him that I was not completely in his power.

'You're a clever chap,' he said to me once. 'It's easy to talk to you; you take everything in at once. Say the word, and I'll make you a minister.'

A suggestion of this kind from Rasputin greatly disconcerted me. I realised how easy it was for him to obtain anything, and I also knew what a scandal might ensue.

'I'll willingly help you; but don't make me a minister,' I answered with a smile.

'What are you laughing at?' he asked. 'D'you think I can't do it? – I can. I can do anything – anything I want, and everybody obeys me. Just you wait! You'll be a minister.'

His persistent and serious tone really perturbed me. I already saw the universal astonishment which would be caused by the announcement in the press.

'Grigori Efimovich, for Heaven's sake, don't!'

I begged. 'Think! How could I possibly be a minister? And anyway, why should I want to be one? . . . It would be ever so much better if I could help without anyone knowing about it."

'All right! Have it your own way,' he finally agreed. 'But it doesn't often happen that people talk like that. They're always at me. It's "Arrange this" and "Arrange that"; they all want something or other.'

'But how do you manage to satisfy them all?' I asked.

'I send 'em to one or other of the ministers, or else I give 'em a note to somebody who's in a position to fix things up. And sometimes I send 'em straight to Tsarskoe Selo. . . . That's how it's worked!'

'And do all the ministers do as you tell them?'

'Every one of 'em,' exclaimed Rasputin. 'Every one! . . . How shouldn't they, when they owe their appointments to me? They know perfectly well that if they cross my path it'll be all the worse for them. Why, the Prime Minister himself daren't stand in my way. It was only the other day that he offered me fifty thousand roubles through a friend of his, if I'd replace Protopopov. . . . He's afraid to come to me himself, bless

him! So he sends his friends instead! . . . And what about Khvostov?[1] There's a scoundrel for you! Always running after me, he was; and as soon as I'd appointed him he got uppish and turned against me. I got him dismissed, of course, just as he deserved. And now he realises his mistake, and he's sorry for it. . . . And so,' added Rasputin, after a short pause, 'you can judge for yourself. The Empress herself is a friend of mine. . . . How can they do anything else but obey me?

'They're all afraid of me, every one of 'em. . . . I've only got to bang my fist down, and there s no more fuss.' And he glanced at his horny hand, not without some degree of pride.

'That's the only way to deal with your aristocrats' – he had a special way of pronouncing this word – 'They can't get over me stalking about the palace in my greasy boots. Their

[1]In 1914, thanks to Rasputin's intrigues, M. A. A. Khvostov, who was then Governor-General of Nizhni-Novgorod, was made Minister of the Interior. He subsequently became convinced of the evil influence exercised by the *starets*, and resolved to poison him. Kurlov, Chief of the Police, whom he regarded as his associate in this project, supplied him with a harmless drug, and afterwards denounced him. Khvostov was forced to resign his portfolio; and, but for his influential position, proceedings would have been taken against him.

trouble is that they're so proud. And it's pride that's the beginning of all our sins. If you want to be pleasing in the sight of God, first of all kill your pride.

'Mark my words, my dear,' he continued with a queer smile, 'the women are worse than the men; you've got to begin with them. Yes. . . . I take them to the baths – it doesn't matter who they are – and when I've got 'em there: "Now take off your clothes," I say, "and wash the muzhik." And if they start putting on airs or making a fuss, I soon stop all that nonsense. . . .'

I listened to him with horror; but I kept silent, fearing that any questions or comments might interrupt his monstrous story – the rest of which is quite unprintable. He was obviously rather drunk, and was enjoying his disclosures.

He poured himself out another glass of madeira and added, with a cough:

'But what about you? Why are you drinking so little? Surely you're not afraid of wine? Why, it's the best medicine in the world. It cures every disease, and it isn't made up by the chemist either. It's God's own remedy – and it strengthens you, body and soul. God has given me such strength, that there's no limit to it. Do you know

Badmaev? I'll introduce you to him. He's got every remedy you could wish for. He's a real doctor, he is. Botkin and Derevenkie[1] are no good at all. They just write down some rubbish or other on bits of paper, and they think the patient's getting well – while all the while he's getting worse and worse. Bádmæv's medicines are nature's own. They come from the forests and mountains, and they're planted by God Himself – and God's blessing is in them.'

'Grigori Efimovich,' I interrupted: 'And the Emperor and Tsetsarevich, why aren't they treated with these medicines?'

'What do you mean, "not treated" with 'em? Of course they are. She[2] and Annushka[3] see to that. They're all afraid that Botkin will find out – but I tell them: "If one of your doctors finds out about my medicines, the patient won't get better, but very much worse. So they're on their guard; and they do everything on the sly.'

'What sort of medicines do you give the Emperor and Tsetsarevich?'

'Different kinds, different kinds. They give

[1]Physicians-in-ordinary to the Imperial Family.
[2]The Empress.
[3]Madame Vyrubova.

"him" tea to drink; and from this tea the blessing of God comes down on him and gives peace to his soul – and everything is well with him, and he's happy.

'And after all,' continued Rasputin, 'he's no Tsar-Emperor. He's just a child of God. You just wait and see; things'll be arranged quite differently.'

'What are you talking about, Grigori Efimovich? What will be different?'

'Oh, you're far too inquisitive. You want to know everything, don't you? You just wait. You'll learn everything in time.'

I had never known Rasputin so communicative. The wine had obviously loosened his tongue. I was loth to miss the opportunity of extracting from this criminal *starets* as many details as possible of his diabolical plan. I encouraged him to drink. For a long time we replenished our glasses in silence, Rasputin tossing off the contents of his at a gulp, while I just lifted mine to my lips and replaced it behind a dish of fruit which stood between us.

When one bottle of strong madeira had been emptied, he rose and stumbled across to the sideboard for another. Again I filled his glass, and pretended to fill my own.

Then I cautiously resumed our conversation at the point where it had broken off.

'Grigori Efimovich, do you remember telling me a little while ago that you wanted me to help you? I am ready to do so; but if I am to be of any use, you must explain what you have in mind. Just now, for instance, you were saying that "everything will be different"; but I don't know why, or in what way.'

Rasputin looked at me intently, with his eyes half-closed, and thought for a moment.

'This is what will happen,' he said. 'There's been enough fighting, enough bloodshed; it's time all this mess was cleared up. What! Aren't the Germans our brethren? Our Lord said: "Love thy enemy as thy brother." But what sort of love is this? He[1] won't budge an inch, and even she's[2] obstinate. Here again somebody's giving 'em bad advice, and they're listening to it. But what's the use of talking about that! Once I order them to do a thing, and show 'em that I mean it, they'll do it right enough. But we're not quite ready yet.

'When it's all settled, we'll hail Alexandra as Regent for her young son and we'll send "him"

[1]The Emperor. [2]The Empress.

to Livadia for a rest. . . . There! Won't that be a treat for him? to be a market-gardener! He's worn out – he must have a rest. . . . Yes, and mark you, down there in Livadia, among the flowers, he'll be nearer to God; and he's got plenty to pray about – the war, for one thing, and all it has cost. A whole life of prayer won't be enough to wipe out that.

'If it wasn't for that confounded woman[1] who stuck a knife into me, I should have been on the spot and would never have let it come to bloodshed. . . . But without me here your cursed Sazonovs and the rest of 'em succeeded in fixing

[1]A peasant girl named Guseva Several unsuccessful attempts had been made on the life of Rasputin In 1914 Guseva – who had lived with him for some years, but had finally forsaken him for his enemy, the monk Heliodor – stabbed him in the abdomen The wound was so serious that he lay at the point of death for many weeks, and, but for his marvellous physique, he would probably not have recovered When charged with the crime, Guseva declared that he was nothing more than a seducer of women She was sent to a lunatic asylum For these and other interesting details concerning the private life and baneful influence of the *starets*, the reader is referred to Dr E J Dillon's book, *The Eclipse of Russia* (Messrs J M Dent & Sons, Ltd, 1918,) and to Sir Paul Vinogradov's admirable article on Rasputin in the Encyclopædia Britannica, vol xxxii, p 249, 1922 Edition (Translator's note)

up the whole business. And look at the harm they've done.

'Now the Empress herself – she's a wise ruler, a second Catherine. Why, she's been governing alone for some time past. You just watch; it'll be better later on.

'She has promised to get rid of all the chatter-boxes first of all. To the devil with the lot of them! Think of it! They've dared to go against the Lord's Anointed. But we'll knock 'em on the head all right. It's high time they were sent to the devil's mother. . . . Every single one of 'em who shouts out against me will only be the worse off for it in the end.'

Rasputin grew more and more heated. Excited by wine and by his plans, it did not seem to occur to him to hide anything from me.

'I'm just like a baited animal; everybody wants to get his teeth into me. I stick in the throat of all your aristocrats. With the people it's different. They respect me, because I'm a peasant – in a peasant's coat and boots – and I've raised myself to be the adviser of the Tsar himself, and of the Tsaritsa too. It's the will of God. The Lord gave me power to read the innermost thoughts of men.

'Only a short time ago General Russki sent some

people to see me. I didn't beat about the bush with 'em. "What have you come for?" I said. . . . Well, well – I promised to arrange it. He's a good man.

'They're all at me to liberate the Jews. And why, thinks I, shouldn't I? They're no different from us. . . . We're all God's creatures.

'So, you see,' he continued, 'how much work there is. And there's nobody to help me. I've got to do everything myself . . . and you can't be everywhere at once. You've got brains, and you'll help me. I'll introduce you to the right people, and you'll be able to make quite a little pile. . . . But I don't suppose you need money. I expect you're richer than the Emperor himself. All the same, you can give it to the poor – everybody's glad to get an odd penny. . . .'

Rasputin's discourse was interrupted by a sudden ring of the bell. He began to fidget. He was evidently expecting some visitor or other, but he had been carried away by our conversation and had forgotten the appointment. He had remembered it now, and he seemed very nervous and anxious that the newcomers should not find me with him.

He jumped up from the table and led me to his

study, and hurriedly left the room. I heard his quick, uncertain steps as he passed through the hall. He bumped into something and knocked it over, with a loud curse. He could hardly keep on his legs, but his head was still clear. I marvelled at the strength of the man.

The voices of the newcomers reached me from the hall. There seemed to be several of them. They went into the dining-room.

I went to the study doors, which opened into the hall, and listened; but the conversation was carried on in low tones and was very difficult to follow. I cautiously pushed the two halves of the door apart, and in the chink thereby formed I could see right across the hall into the dining-room, of which the doors had been left open. Rasputin was sitting at the table, just where he had been while talking to me.

There were five men sitting quite close to him, while two others were standing behind his chair. Some of them were writing rapidly in their note-books.

I carefully examined these mysterious visitors. They were all unpleasant to look upon. Four of them were typically and unmistakably Jewish in appearance. The remaining three were singularly

alike; they were fair-haired, with red faces and small eyes. One of them I seemed to have seen somewhere or other, but I could not remember where. Some of them were sitting in their overcoats.

In their presence Rasputin had completely changed. Sitting in a careless, sprawling attitude, he was holding forth to them, with an air of importance.

The whole group looked like some meeting of conspirators. They wrote, conferred in whispers, and read out from various papers.

The thought flashed through me: 'Can these be the "zelenenkie" of whom Rasputin had spoken?'

Remembering all that I had heard from him I had no doubt that before me was an assembly of spies. In this very ordinary room, with the *ikon* of the Saviour in the corner, and the Imperial portraits on the wall, the fate of millions of Russians was apparently being decided.

I felt a desire to leave this sinister flat as quickly as possible, but Rasputin's study had only the one exit, and to go out of the room unnoticed was impossible. After what seemed to be an eternity Rasputin at last returned to me with a pleased, self-satisfied look on his face. I hurriedly took my leave of him, and departed.

CHAPTER IX

HOW WE DECIDED TO ACT

My meetings with Rasputin, and all that I had seen and heard, had firmly convinced me that he was at the root of all the evil, and the primary cause of all the misfortunes which had befallen Russia.

Rasputin's death would put an end to that diabolical power which held the Emperor and Empress in its toils.

It seemed as if fate had led me to this man, that I might see with my own eyes the part he played, and the goal towards which his unbounded influence was urging us all.

What, then, was the use of waiting?

Was it possible to spare Rasputin, who was driving Russia and the dynasty to their doom, and by his treachery was swelling the list of casualties in the war?

Was there even one honest man who did not sincerely wish for his death?

There was no shadow of doubt; everyone desired the death of the criminal *starets*, and the sooner the better.

And so the question was no longer: 'Should

Rasputin be killed?' but: 'Could *I* undertake this responsibility?'

It was necessary to take decisive measures. This abominable play of 'friendship' could not be kept up any longer.

Our original plan of shooting him in his own flat now seemed impracticable, in view of the extreme tension throughout the country. The war was at its height, the army was preparing an offensive, and the open assassination of Rasputin might be interpreted as a demonstration against the Tsar and his family.

It was not a propitious moment for open measures. It seemed to me necessary that Rasputin should vanish in such a way that no one should know how or whither he had gone; and it was most important that those responsible for his disappearance should remain unknown.

I felt that Purishkevich and Maklakov, who fully realised the evil influence of Rasputin, would be able to give me good advice. Their public denunciations of him in the Duma were still fresh in my memory.

Men who had exposed Rasputin with such vehemence could not fail to share my views and

to approve my intentions. I believed that they would help me.

I approached Maklakov first. I made an appointment with him, and went to his flat. Our conversation was very brief. I explained my plan to him in very few words, and asked him his opinion.

Maklakov avoided giving me a clear answer. His hesitation and mistrust could be felt in the question which he put to me:

'And why have you come to me, in particular?'

'I heard your speech in the Duma,' I replied.

It was clear that he inwardly approved of my plan; and I was at a loss to understand the reason for his evasive attitude. Was it due to lack of confidence in me as a man whom he knew only by name, or was it simply his fear of being involved in a dangerous enterprise? Whatever might be the explanation, a short talk with him sufficed to convince me that his assistance was not worth counting on. I realised that he was too cautious to venture on decisive action. However bitterly he might feel against Rasputin, his apprehensiveness would always gain the upper hand.

On my return home I telephoned to Purish-

kevich, and arranged to go and see him on the following morning.

My interview with Purishkevich was of a very different kind. I had hardly begun to speak of Rasputin and of my intention to do away with him, when he exclaimed, with characteristic vivacity and fervour:

'Why, that has long been a dream of my own, I am ready with all my heart to help you if you want me; but it isn't as easy as you think. You can't get at Rasputin without slipping through a whole crowd of officials and spies who surround him.'

'All that has already been arranged,' I answered. I explained to him how I had got into touch with the *starets*, and told him of our conversations.

Purishkevich listened with great interest. I mentioned the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich and Captain Sukhotin, and told him of my conversation with Maklakov.

Purishkevich fully shared my opinion that Rasputin must be put away secretly.

While fully realising the difficulties of carrying out our plan, he did not for a moment doubt its necessity or its immense political significance. He was firmly convinced that the root of the evil

lay in Rasputin, and that only by his removal could the country be saved from inevitable collapse.

Purishkevich was not in the least surprised at Maklakov's excessive caution. He said he would take an early opportunity of talking things over with him, and that he would try to win him to our side.

Having assured myself of Purishkevich's co-operation, I took my leave. We arranged that on the following evening he should visit me at the Moika, to work out a general plan of action.

By 5 p.m. next day the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich, Purishkevich and Captain Sukhotin had duly assembled at my house.

After lengthy discussion we came to the following conclusion:

Rasputin must be done away with by means of poison, this being the method which would leave fewest traces of his assassination.

My friends fully agreed that his destruction should bear the character of a sudden disappearance, and that it should be kept a close secret.

Our house on the Moika was chosen as the place where our project was to be carried out.

A suite of rooms there was being adapted for my own use, and would serve our purpose better than anything else. My associations with Rasputin would afford me an opportunity of persuading him to come and visit me.

This decision caused me much heart-searching. The prospect of inviting a man to my house with the intention of killing him horrified me.

Whoever the man might be – even Rasputin, the incarnation of crime and vice – I could not contemplate without a shudder the part which I should be called upon to play – that of a host encompassing the death of his guest.

My friends fully understood my feelings. After much discussion, however, we arrived at the conclusion that where the destiny of all Russia was concerned, all considerations or feelings of a personal nature should be set aside.

Our decisions were final; but one or two complications arose. The house alterations to which I have referred could not be completed before the middle of December. Both the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich and Purishkevich were due to leave for the front before then, although they would be returning to St. Petersburg by the time the rooms were ready. In this respect everything

fitted in quite well, but for over two months I had to face the repugnant task of keeping up my relations with Rasputin.

It had been difficult enough hitherto to associate with a man whose destruction I considered essential, but the prospect of continuing to associate with him now that we had passed definite sentence upon him was still more painful.

Purishkevich proposed a fifth accomplice — a Dr. Lazovert, who served in his detachment. We agreed.

Our second meeting took place in the Red Cross train commanded by Purishkevich. Here we discussed and arranged all the details of our joint action, and definitely adopted the following plan :

I was to continue to visit Rasputin, losing no opportunity of strengthening his confidence in me; and some day I was to invite him to my house, in such conditions that his visit could be kept an absolute secret.

On the day that Rasputin should choose to come to me, I was to call for him towards midnight, and drive him to the Moika in an open car, with Dr. Lazovert as chauffeur.

While Rasputin was drinking tea, I was to

administer a solution of cyanide of potassium, which would cause his immediate death. His body was to be put into a sack, driven out of town and thrown into the water. A closed car would be required for this purpose, and the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich suggested that we should make use of his. This was particularly expedient, for the Grand Duke's flag, attached to the bonnet of the car, would safeguard us from every suspicion and delay.

While Rasputin was in my house I was to be alone with him. The others should be waiting in an adjoining room, so that they could come to my help in case of necessity.

Whatever might be the outcome of our project, we agreed to deny, at all costs, our complicity in the murder of Rasputin or in an attempt on his life.

The place where Rasputin's body was finally to be disposed of was to be selected after the return of the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich and Purishkevich to St. Petersburg.

They both left for the front a few days afterwards. Captain Sukhotin and I met almost daily after their departure.

Before he left St. Petersburg, Purishkevich

had asked me to do my utmost to obtain Maklakov's close co-operation in our plans; and I accordingly went to see him again.

I was agreeably surprised at finding a change in his attitude. Instead of giving me evasive answers, he expressed his full approval of everything we had planned. But when I suggested that he should join us, he replied that towards the middle of December he would probably have to go to Moscow for a few days on very urgent business. I interpreted this to mean that while expressing his full sympathy with us in words, he wished to avoid all action which might implicate him in our plot. All the same, I gave him a detailed description of our plans. He listened with the greatest attention, agreeing with all our arguments, and concurring in our proposed line of action . . . but he showed no desire to render any active assistance.

He said good-bye to me with great kindness, and wished us complete success. Incidentally he made me a present of a loaded stick.

'Take this,' he said, with a smile, 'in case you might ever want it.'

CHAPTER X

RASPUTIN ACCEPTS MY INVITATION

In the meantime I was completing my course at the *Corps des Pages*, and Colonel Fogel continued to coach me.

I went to see Rasputin now and then, in order to keep up relations with him. The repulsion with which he inspired me increased with the necessity of visiting him and talking to him.

One of these visits took place a few days before the return of the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich and Purishkevich to St. Petersburg.

Rasputin was in very good humour.

'Why are you in such good spirits?' I asked him.

'Well, I've brought off a very nice little deal. We shan't have to wait long now. Our turn's coming.'

'What's it all about?' I asked.

'What's it all about? What's it all about?' he repeated, trying to mimic me. 'You're afraid of me, and you've stopped coming to see me. I've got lots of interesting things to tell you. . . . But I won't, just because you're afraid of me. You're afraid of everything. If you weren't, I'd tell you.'

I explained to him that I had been preparing for my examinations at the *Corps des Pages*, and that the sole reason why I had not been to see him was that I had not had a moment to spare.

He merely repeated: 'I know, I know. You're afraid of me. Your parents won't let you come. Your mother's hand-in-glove with "Lizbeth".[1] They both of 'em think of nothing else but how to get me away. But they won't manage that. No attention'll be paid to 'em. They like me at Tsarskoe. And the more I'm spoken against, the more they love me; so that's that!'

'But, Grigori Efimovich,' I said, 'you behave quite differently at Tsarskoe Selo. While you're there you only talk about God; and that's why they have faith in you.'

'And why shouldn't I speak to them of God, my dear? They're God-fearing people, and they like such talk. They understand and forgive everything, and they appreciate me. . . . And as to people saying bad things about me – it's all waste of breath; they won't be believed. I've often said to 'em, "People will revile me, but remember how Christ was persecuted. He also suffered for truth's sake." And so they hear

[1]The Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna.

what everybody's got to say; but they act for themselves, as their conscience bids them.

'With him[1], though, it's sometimes difficult. As soon as he gets any distance away from home he begins to listen to evil-minded people. I've had a worrying time with him just lately.

'"We've had enough bloodshed," I tell him. "Russians, Germans, Frenchmen – we're all brethren. And this war is God's punishment for our sins." But that's as far as we get. He's obstinate. All he does is to repeat his "It would be shameful to sign peace!"

'And where's the shame, if you're saving your brethren? Millions of people will be killed, I tell you. . . .

'Now "she" is a good and wise ruler. . . . As for "him" – what does he understand? It's not his line. He's a child of God: that's what he is.

'The one thing I'm afraid of,' continued Rasputin, 'is that Nikolai Nikolaivich may stop it all if he finds out! All he wants is to go on fighting, sending people to their death, to no purpose. But he's a long way off now, and his arms are short – he can't reach us. That's why he was sent

[1]The Emperor.

all that way – so that he shouldn't meddle and get into difficulties.'

'But I think it was a great mistake,' I said, 'to remove the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaivich. All Russia worshipped him.'

'That's just why he was sent off. He got too uppish and aimed too high! The Empress at once realised which way the wind was blowing.'

'That's not true, Grigori Efimovich; the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaivich is not at all that kind of man. He had no ulterior motives; he was just doing his duty towards Russia and the Tsar. Since he went away everything has gone from bad to worse. It was a mistake to deprive the army of their beloved leader at such a critical time.'

'Now, don't you be too clever. If it was done, it means it had to be done, and that it was the right thing to do.'

Rasputin rose to his feet and began to pace thoughtfully up and down the room, muttering to himself. Suddenly he stood still. He came quickly towards me and brusquely seized me by the arm. There was a strange light in his eyes.

'Come to the gypsies with me,' he said. 'If you come – I'll tell you everything, down to the last detail.'

I agreed, but at that moment the telephone-bell rang. Rasputin was then and there summoned to Tsarskoe Selo. I took advantage of this interruption to suggest that he should come and spend the evening at my home in a few days' time.

He had long shown a desire to make the acquaintance of my wife, and thinking that she was in St. Petersburg, and that my parents were still in the Crimea, he said he would come with pleasure.

As a matter of fact, my wife had not yet arrived in St. Petersburg; she was still in the Crimea with my parents. But I thought that Rasputin would more readily accept my invitation if he were unaware of this.

I then took my leave of him.

The Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich and Purishkevich returned from the front a few days afterwards.

We had several discussions, at one of which it was decided that Rasputin should be invited to our house on the Moika on December 16th.[1]

I telephoned to him and asked if he would come on the evening of that day. He agreed, on condition that I should go and fetch him myself,

[1]The date on which my wife would have returned from the Crimea, if illness had not prevented her from doing so.

and that I should drive him back. Further, he asked me to approach his flat by the back staircase, promising that he would warn the *dvornik*[1] that a friend would be calling for him at twelve o'clock that night. He took these precautions with the object of leaving the house unnoticed.

It surprised and appalled me to think how readily he agreed to everything; it seemed as if he himself were helping us in our difficult task.

The appointed day drew near.

I asked the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich to select a place on the Neva where it would be possible to dispose of Rasputin's body.

He came back to me that evening, having spent several hours in the search. We sat and talked for a long time. He spoke to me of his recent visit to G. H.Q. He was very depressed at finding the Emperor so thin and aged, so apathetic and indifferent to all that was happening.

His words brought back to my mind all that I had heard from Rasputin. It seemed as if Russia were about to be engulfed in an abyss.

We felt convinced of the justice of our decision to destroy the man who had so multiplied all the sufferings of our unhappy country.

[1]The house-watchman.

CHAPTER XI

THE CELLARS AT NO. 94 MOIKA

In the morning of the 16th. (New Style-29th) of December, during an interval in my work, I drove to our house on the Moika, in order to give final instructions.

The room in which Rasputin was to be received that evening was situated in the basement of the house, and had just been redecorated. It had to be arranged in such a way as to give the impression of being habitually used; otherwise Rasputin's suspicions might be aroused, for it would seem strange to him to be conducted into a cheerless and uncomfortable vault.

On my arrival I found the upholsterers there, laying carpets and putting up curtains.

There were no signs of furniture as yet, and I went up to the store-room to select what was suitable.

The newly-decorated room had originally formed part of the wine-cellar. In the daytime it was a rather dark and gloomy chamber, with a granite floor, walls faced with grey stone, and a low vaulted ceiling. Two small narrow windows, level with the ground, looked on to the Moika.

A low arch divided the room into two parts, one of which was rather narrow, while the other was wide and spacious, and was intended for use as a dining-room. From the narrower part, the entrance door opened towards a spiral staircase. On the first landing of this staircase there was a door opening into the courtyard, while a little higher up was my study.

Anyone entering these rooms, therefore, would first come into the narrower portion. Here, in shallow recesses, were two big Chinese vases of red porcelain, which stood out in striking relief against the sombre grey walls.

I ordered some antique furniture to be brought down from the store-room, and we began to arrange the dining-room. I can still picture the whole scene, down to the smallest detail.

There were carved chairs upholstered in mellowed leather, small ebony cupboards full of secret recesses and drawers, massive oak chairs with high backs, and here and there little tables covered with coloured fabrics, bearing ivory goblets and Italian *objets d'art*.

I have a particularly vivid recollection of an inlaid cupboard, the interior of which was a labyrinth of mirrors and little bronze columns.

On this cupboard stood a XVIIth crucifix of rock-crystal and silver, of Italian workmanship.

In the dining-room there was a large open fireplace of red granite; over it were a number of gilt cups and old Majolica plates and a group carved in ebony. The floor was spread with a large Persian carpet; and in front of the labyrinth cupboard and crucifix was a huge white bear-skin.

In the middle of the room we placed the table at which Grigori Rasputin was to drink his last.

In arranging the room I was assisted by our house-steward, and by my servant. I ordered them to prepare, by eleven o'clock that evening, a meal for six persons. They were to get a good supply of biscuits and cakes, and wine from the cellar. I explained to them that I was expecting visitors, and that as soon as they had prepared tea they were to withdraw to the service-room until I should send for them.

When all these arrangements had been completed I went up to my study, where Colonel Fogel was already awaiting me.

I worked with him until about six o'clock, and

then went to my temporary quarters at the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich's Palace. After a hurried meal there I returned to my home at Moika No. 94.

CHAPTER XII

THE LAST VISIT TO GOROKHOVAYA STREET

BY eleven o'clock everything was ready.

The *samovar* stood on the table, with various cakes and sweetmeats for which Rasputin had a great liking. On one of the sideboards was a tray with wines and glasses.

I was still alone in the house as I cast an eye over the room and its arrangements.

Antique lanterns, with panes of varied colours, lit the room from above; the heavy dark-red curtains were drawn. In the open fireplace a huge fire was burning; the logs crackled and threw out sparks on the stone hearth.

The room was almost underground, and was ordinarily of a rather gloomy aspect; but now, thanks to the lighting and furnishings, it was astonishingly cosy. Moreover, the stillness which reigned lent an air of mystery, a sort of detachment from the world. It seemed that whatever might happen here would be hidden from mortal eyes and buried for ever in the silence of these stone walls.

A bell rang. It told me of the arrival of the

Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich and the rest of my associates.

I went to meet them. They looked confident and in good spirits, but they all talked rather loudly and seemed unnaturally gay, as if their nerves were on edge.

We passed into the dining-room. The arrangement of it greatly impressed my friends, particularly the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich, who had seen it the day before, when nothing was as yet ready.

They all stood in silence for a while, as they examined the scene of the approaching event.

I drew from the labyrinth cupboard a box containing poison, and took from the table a plate of cakes; there were six – three with chocolate, and three with almond icing.

Dr. Lazovert put on rubber gloves and took out the crystals of cyanide of potassium. He crushed them, and having removed the upper layers from the chocolate cakes, sprinkled each of them with a strong dose of poison, afterwards replacing the tops.

We followed his movements with strained attention. A tense silence reigned in the room.

All that now remained to be done was to shake some powdered crystals into the wine-glasses.

We decided to do this at the last possible moment, so that the poison might not lose strength by evaporation. The total amount of poison applied was enormous: the doctor assured us that the dose was many times stronger than would be required to cause death.

To make everything appear natural it was necessary that there should be a number of used cups on the table, as though people had just taken tea. I had explained to Rasputin that when we had visitors tea was served in the lower dining-room, and that after the others had gone upstairs I sometimes remained below, reading.

We slightly disarranged the table and the room, drawing back the chairs, and pouring a little tea into the cups. I further arranged with the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich, Sukhotin, and Purishkevich, that within ten minutes of my departure they should go upstairs to my study and turn on the gramophone, selecting the most cheerful records they could find. My object was to keep Rasputin in good humour, and to clear his mind of all suspicion. For I could not entirely rid myself of the fear that the underground situation of the rooms might put him on his guard.

When all these preparations had been com-

pleted, Dr. Lazovert and I left the room. He changed into chauffeur's clothes and went to start the car, which was standing at the side entrance in the courtyard, while I put on a voluminous fur cloak and a fur cap with ear-pieces, which served to conceal my face.

We got into the car and drove off.

My head was a whirl of thoughts. I was sustained by my hopes for the future. During those few short minutes of my last drive to Rasputin's I lived through a whole life of emotions.

The car stopped outside No. 64 Gorokhovaya Street.

On entering the courtyard I was at once challenged by the *dvornik*.

'Whom do you want?'

On learning that I wanted to see Grigori Efimovich he was unwilling to let me pass, and insisted that I should give my name and explain why I was calling at so late an hour.

I replied that Grigori Efimovich himself had asked me to come at this particular hour and to go up to him by the back staircase. The *dvornik* looked me over with distrust, but nevertheless allowed me to pass.

The staircase was in darkness, and I had to

feel my way. I had not even any matches with me. With great difficulty I at last succeeded in finding the entrance to Rasputin's flat.

I rang, and in reply heard his voice from behind the closed door: 'Who's there?'

I shuddered.

'Grigori Efimovich, it is I. I've come to fetch you,' I answered.

I heard him moving and bustling about. The door was chained and bolted, and I felt uneasy as the chain clanged and the heavy bolt grated at his touch.

He led the way and I went into the kitchen.

It was in darkness, and I felt that someone was watching me from the adjoining room. Instinctively I turned up my collar and pulled down my cap.

'What are you muffling yourself up like that for?' asked Rasputin.

'Why, didn't we decide that no one should know about to-night?' I replied.

'True, true. I haven't told anybody here, and I've sent off all the *tainiki*.[1] Come on; I'll get ready.'

We went into his bedroom, which was partially lit by a lamp in the corner, in front of the *ikons*.

[1]Agents of the secret police.

Rasputin applied a match to a candle. I noticed that the bed was disarranged – he had evidently just been resting. His fur coat and beaver hat were in readiness. On the floor was a pair of snow boots.

He was dressed in a white silk blouse embroidered with corn-flowers and girded with a thick raspberry-coloured cord with large tassels, wide trousers of black velvet, and long boots, brand new. Even his hair and beard were carefully combed and smoothed. As he drew nearer to me I felt a strong smell of cheap soap. He had obviously paid special attention to his toilet that day, certainly I had never before seen him so clean and tidy.

'Well, Grigori Efimovich, isn't it time we were off? It's already nearly one o'clock.'

'Shall we go on to the gypsies? What d'you say?' he asked.

'I don't know – perhaps,' I answered.

'But there won't be anybody special at your place to-night?' he said, with a note of uneasiness in his voice.

I calmed him by telling him that he would meet no one whom he disliked, and that my mother was still in the Crimea.

'I don't like her, your mother. And she can't

stand me, I know . . . she's a friend of Lizbeth.[1] They're both digging pits for me, and slandering me. . . . The Empress herself has told me time and again that they're my worst enemies. . . .'

'And what d'you think?' he added unexpectedly. 'Protopopov drove round here this evening, and made me promise that I'd stay at home during these next few days. "They want to kill you," he said. "Evil-minded people are plotting against you." Ah, well! Let 'em plot. They won't succeed – they haven't got a long enough reach.

'But what's the use of talking about it! Let's go!'

I picked up his coat from a chest and helped him into it.

'Money – I've forgotten my money,' he said, in a fluster. He went to the chest and opened it.

I moved nearer and, looking into it, I saw a number of parcels wrapped in newspaper.

'Surely that isn't all money?' I asked.

'Of course it is – nothing but bank-notes; I got 'em to-day,' he answered without hesitation.

'Who gave them to you?'

'Various kind people. I just fixed up a little affair, and out of gratitude they made a donation to the Church.'

[1]The Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna.

'I suppose there's a good deal of money there?'

'Why should I bother to count it? I haven't time. I'm not a banker! That's a job for Mitka Rubinstein;[1] he's got pots of money. Besides, to tell you the truth, I can't count it. I just said to 'em, "Bring fifty thousand, otherwise I shan't worry over you." Well, and they sent it. Perhaps they've given more! How should I know?

'It'll make a nice little wedding present for my daughter,' he continued. 'She's going to be married soon, to an officer with four St. George's Crosses.[2] He earned 'em, too. And there's a fat little job waiting for him. "She"[3] has promised to give her blessing.'

'But, Grigori Efimovich, didn't you say that this money was a donation to the Church?'

'Well, what about that? There's nothing to be surprised at! Marriage is of God, isn't it? The Lord Himself gave His blessing at Cana, in Galilee. And as to the particular use to which this money is put, isn't it all the same to Him – to God?' replied Rasputin, with a cunning leer.

I could not help being amused at the naïve

[1] A notorious St. Petersburg financier.

[2] A high military decoration awarded for gallantry in the field.

[3] The Empress Alexandra Feodorovna.

insolence with which Rasputin played with the words of the Holy Scriptures.

He took some money from the chest, which he then carefully locked. He blew out the candle, and the room was again in semi-darkness – illuminated only by the lamp which burned fitfully before the *ikon* in the corner.

I was suddenly overwhelmed by a feeling of infinite pity for this man.

I felt disgusted and ashamed at the thought of the vile means and appalling deception with which I was luring him to my home. Here was my victim – standing before me, suspecting nothing, trusting me.

At that moment I was filled with the deepest contempt for myself; I asked myself how I could have decided to commit such a hideous crime; and I could not understand how it had happened.

He trusted me. . . . But what had become of his insight? What had happened to his instinct? It seemed as if fate had somehow clouded his reason, and blinded him to our intentions.

But then I saw, with amazing clearness, one scene after another from the life of Rasputin. All my qualms of conscience, all my remorse vanished, and gave place to a steadfast determina-

tion to complete the task which we had undertaken.

I hesitated no longer.

We walked towards the dark landing, and Rasputin closed the door behind him.

The lock grated noisily, and a harsh, ominous echo rang down the deserted staircase. We were in total darkness.

I felt a vice-like grip on my arm.

'I'll show you the way,' said Rasputin as he led me down. His grasp hurt me. I wanted to protest and shake it off; but I felt numb.' . . . I do not remember anything that he said to me, or whether I replied. At that moment there was only one thing I desired: to get into the open air as soon as possible, to see as much light as possible, and not to feel the touch of that terrible hand.

As soon as we got downstairs my horror left me, and I again became cool and collected.

We got into the car and drove off.

I looked through the rear window to find out whether we were followed. Not a soul was to be seen in the darkness.

We proceeded by a circuitous route, and on reaching the Moika, we turned into the courtyard, and drew up at the side entrance.

CHAPTER XIII

THE NIGHT OF THE 16TH DECEMBER

On entering the house I heard my friends' voices, and the sounds of a popular American song on the gramophone. Rasputin stopped to listen.

'What's this going on? A party?'

'No; my wife has friends with her. They will go away soon, so for the time being let's go down to the dining-room and have some tea.'

We went downstairs. Rasputin removed his fur coat and proceeded to scrutinise the room and furniture.

He was particularly interested in the labyrinth cupboard. He showed quite a childish delight in it, and returned to it again and again, opening and shutting the small doors and examining the interior. He refused at first to take either tea or wine.

'Does he suspect anything?' I wondered; but I there and then decided that in any case he should not leave the house alive.

We sat down at the table and talked. We discussed mutual friends, the G.'s and Vyrubova, and we touched upon Tsarskoe Selo.

'Grigori Efimovich, why did Protopopov come to you? Is he in constant fear of a plot against you?' I asked.

'Yes, I'm a stumbling-block to a good many people, because I'm always telling the truth. . . . Your aristocrats don't like the idea of a common muzhik wandering about the Palaces. It's all sheer envy and malice. But why should I be afraid of them? . . . they can't do any harm to me: I'm proof against evil designs. They've had more than one try, but the Lord laid their plans bare. Take Khvostov. He tried it on, but he was punished and dismissed. They daren't even touch me. They'd only get into trouble.'

His words sounded ominous.

But nothing could now dismay me. During the whole of that conversation I had only one idea in my head: to make him drink wine out of those poisoned glasses, and to eat the poisoned cakes.

He exhausted his ordinary topics after a time, and asked for some tea.

I poured him out a cup, and pushed a plate of biscuits towards him. Why I offered him the biscuits, which were not poisoned, I cannot explain.

It was only some time afterwards that I took the plate of poisoned cakes and passed them to him.

He declined them at first.

'Don't want 'em; they're too sweet,' he said.

However, he soon took one, then a second. . . . Without moving a muscle I watched him take them and eat them, one after another.

The cyanide should have taken immediate effect; but to my utter amazement he continued to converse with me as if he were none the worse for them.

I then suggested that he should sample our Crimean wines.

Again he refused.

Time passed. I began to get impatient. I poured out two glasses, one for him, the other for myself. I placed his glass in front of him and began to drink out of my own, thinking that he would follow my example.

'Well, let me try it,' said Rasputin, stretching out his hand for the wine. It was not poisoned.

Why I first gave him the wine in an unpoisoned glass I am also at a loss to explain.

He drank it with obvious pleasure, praised it, and asked if we had much of it. On hearing

that we had a whole cellar full, he showed great astonishment.

He became animated. 'Now give me some madeira,' he said.

I got up to take another glass, but he protested:

'Pour it into this one.'

'But that's impossible, Grigori Efimovich. You can t mix red wine with madeira.'

'Never mind; pour it out into this, I tell you.'

I had to give way.

By an apparent accident, however, I soon managed to knock his glass to the floor, where it smashed.

I took advantage of this to pour wine into one of the glasses containing cyanide of potassium. Having once begun to drink he made no further protest.

I stood in front of him and followed each movement he made, expecting every moment to be his last.

But he drank slowly, taking small sips at a time, just as if he had been connoisseur.

His face did not change; but from time to time he put his hand to his throat as if he found slight difficulty in swallowing. He got up and moved about the room, and when I asked him whether

anything was the matter, 'Oh, nothing much,' he said, 'just an irritation in the throat.

There was a nerve-racking pause.

'That's very good madeira. Give me some more,' said Rasputin, holding out his glass.

The poison still had no effect. The *starets* continued to walk about the room.

I took no notice of the glass which he held out to me, but seized another poisoned one from the tray. I poured wine into it, and passed it to him.

He drained it: and still the poison had no effect.

There remained the third and last glass.

In despair, I began to drink myself, hoping to induce him to drink more and more.

We sat opposite each other in silence.

He looked at me with a cunning smile. I seemed to hear him say:

'You see! It doesn't matter how you try; you can't do me any harm.'

But all of a sudden his expression changed into one of fiendish hatred. Never before had he inspired me with such horror.

I felt an indescribable loathing for him and was ready to throw myself upon him and throttle him.

I felt that he knew why I had brought him there,

and what I intended to do to him. A mute and deadly conflict seemed to be taking place between us. I was aghast. Another moment and I should have gone under. I felt that confronted by those satanic eyes, I was beginning to lose my self-control. A strange feeling of numbness took possession of me. My head reeled. . . . I saw nothing. . . . I do not know how long this lasted. . . .

Rasputin was still sitting in the same position. His head was bent, and he was supporting it with his hands. I could not see his eyes.

I regained my presence of mind and offered him some tea.

'Yes, give me a cup; I'm terribly thirsty,' he said in a weak voice.

He raised his head. His eyes were dim, and he seemed to be avoiding my glance.

While I was pouring out tea, he got up and paced the room. His eyes fell upon the guitar, which happened to have been left in the room.

'Play something,' he begged. 'Play something cheerful. I love the way you sing.'

It was difficult to comply at such a moment. . . and he was asking me to sing 'something cheerful.'

'I'm not in the mood,' I said, as I took the guitar.

He sat and listened attentively at first; but as I continued, his head drooped towards the table.

The moment I stopped he opened his eyes and looked at me with a calm and sad expression in them.

'Sing another,' he said.

I sang again.

My voice sounded strange in my ears.

Time passed. . . . The hands of the clock pointed to half-past two. This nightmare had lasted over two hours.

'What will happen if my nerves don't hold out?' I wondered.

Upstairs, too, patience had evidently become exhausted.

The sounds from that quarter became more pronounced, and I was afraid that my friends would come down.

'What's all that noise?' asked Rasputin, lifting his head.

'Probably it's the guests going away,' I replied; 'I'll go up and see.'

As I entered the study, the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich, Purishkevich, and Sukhotin rushed towards me with revolvers in their hands.

Questions showered on me.

'Well? It is done? It is all over?'

'The poison has had no effect,' I said.

They gazed at me in mute astonishment.

'Impossible,' exclaimed the Grand Duke. 'The dose was amply sufficient.'

'Did he take it all?' asked the others.

'Every bit of it,' I answered.

We began to discuss what to do next, and decided that we would go downstairs together, throw ourselves on Rasputin, and strangle him. We were carefully making our way down the staircase, when I suddenly realised that by doing this we should ruin everything. The unexpected appearance of strangers would at once warn Rasputin of our intentions, and there was no telling how matters would end. It had to be remembered that we were not dealing with an ordinary type of man.

I called my friends back into the study and told them of my apprehensions. With great difficulty I persuaded them to leave me to finish with Rasputin alone. For a long time they would not agree; they had qualms on my behalf.

But finally I took the Grand Duke's revolver and went down to the dining-room.

Rasputin was sitting at the table, just as I had

left him. His head was sunken and he was breathing heavily.

I went quietly up to him and sat beside him. He took no notice of my approach.

A few minutes passed in silence, and then he slowly raised his head and looked at me. His eyes were dim; with a dull, lifeless expression in them.

'Are you feeling unwell?' I asked.

'Yes, my head is heavy, and my stomach is burning. Give me another glass – that will ease me.'

I poured him out some madeira; he drank it at a gulp, and at once revived and regained his good spirits.

I exchanged a few sentences with him and saw that he was perfectly conscious, and that his mind was working normally. All of a sudden he suggested that we should go to the gypsies. I refused, on the ground that it was too late.

'What does that matter! They're used to it! They sometimes wait up for me all night. I'm sometimes kept at Tsarksoe Selo on important business, or just talking about God . . . but afterwards I drive over to them in the car. The body also has to have a rest sometimes . . . isn't that true? With God in thought, but with

mankind in the flesh. That's the idea,' said Rasputin, with a significant wink.

A conversation of this kind was the very last thing which I could have expected from him at that moment.

Here I had been sitting all that time with a man who had swallowed an enormous dose of the most deadly poison; I had been watching every one of his movements in the expectation of a fatal issue; and now he was suggesting that we should go to the gypsies! But what amazed me most was that in spite of his instinctive knowledge and insight, he should now be so utterly unconscious of his approaching end.

How could his sharp eyes fail to observe that, clenched in my hand behind my back, was a revolver which in an instant would be aimed at him?

As this thought flashed through my mind, I looked round for some reason or other, and my glance fell on the crystal crucifix. I rose and went up to it.

'What are you doing over there so long?' asked Rasputin.

'I love this cross; it's a very beautiful thing,' I answered.

'Yes, it's a nice thing. Cost a lot of money, I'm sure. . . . How much did you pay for it?'

He came towards me and, without waiting for an answer, he continued:

'But this is what takes my fancy most.' And again he opened the labyrinth cupboard and began to examine it.

'Grigori Efimovich, you had better look at the crucifix, and say a prayer before it.'

Rasputin looked at me in amazement, and with a trace of fear.

I saw a new and unfamiliar expression in his eyes, a touch of gentleness and submission. He came right up to me, looking me full in the face, and he seemed to read in my glance something which he was not expecting. I realised that the supreme moment was at hand.

'God give me strength to end it all,' I thought, and I slowly brought the revolver from behind my back. Rasputin was still standing motionless before me, his head turned to the right, and his eyes on the crucifix.

'Where shall I shoot?' I thought. 'Through the temple or through the heart?'

A streak of lightning seemed to run through my body. I fired.

There was a roar as from a wild beast, and Rasputin fell heavily backwards on the bear-skin rug.

I heard a noise on the staircase: my friends were hurrying to my aid. In their haste they caught against the main switch just outside the room, and I suddenly found myself in darkness.

Someone stumbled against me and called out in fright.

I did not move; I was afraid of stepping on to the body in the dark.

The light was switched on at last.

They all rushed towards Rasputin. . . .

He was lying on his back. His face twitched now and then; his hands were convulsively clenched; his eyes were closed.

There was a small red spot on his silk blouse.

We bent over him and looked at him closely.

Some of those present wanted to fire at him again, but were restrained by the fear of leaving unnecessary traces of blood.

In a few minutes Rasputin became quite still.

We examined the wound. The bullet had passed through the region of the heart. There could be no doubt about it; he was dead.

The Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich removed

the body from the bear-skin to the stone floor. We switched off the electric light, closed and locked the dining-room door, and went upstairs to my study.

We all felt elated, so convinced were we that the events of that night would deliver Russia from ruin and dishonour.

CHAPTER XIV

DEATH WHICH WAS NO DEATH

In conformity with our plan, the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich, Captain Sukhotin and Dr. Lazavert had now to stage a fictitious return of Rasputin to his own flat – in case the secret police had followed him on our drive to my house. Sukhotin had to disguise himself in Rasputin's fur coat and cap, and drive off in Purishkevich's car with the Grand Duke and the doctor in the direction of the Gorokhovaya.

Rasputin's clothing had to be conveyed to the Warsaw station, where it was to be burnt in Purishkevich's Red Cross train – the car being left there. From the station they were to take a cab and drive to the Grand Duke's palace; there they were to pick up his closed car, in which they were to return to the Moika.

Rasputin's body was then to be conveyed in that car from my home to the Petrovski Island.

We requested the doctor, who acted as chauffeur, to drive as fast as possible, and to try and cover his tracks.

Purishkevich and I remained behind. While awaiting the return of our companions we talked

and dreamed of the future of our country, now for ever delivered from her evil genius.

We believed that Russia was saved, and that with Rasputin's disappearance a new era had dawned. We believed that we should everywhere find support; and that all those who were near the seat of power, delivered from the intrigues of this upstart, would henceforward work in friendly unison. We could not then foresee that those whose hands had been thus freed would assume such a criminally frivolous attitude both towards his death and towards the duties which confronted them.

We did not for a moment realise that personal interests, base truckling, and the thirst for power and reputation would so effectively stifle all feelings of duty and patriotism.

The death of Rasputin opened out limitless possibilities before those who were in positions of influence and power. But not one of them desired or was able to take advantage of the favourable moment.

I refrain from naming those people; some day their attitude towards Russia will be set down at its real value.

But that night we were in an excited frame of

mind. We had passed through nerve-racking experiences. We had fulfilled an onerous duty towards our Emperor and our country. Gloomy forebodings were far removed from us.

In the midst of our conversation I was suddenly seized by a vague feeling of alarm; I was overwhelmed by the desire to go down to the dining-room. I went downstairs and unlocked the door.

Rasputin lay motionless, but on touching him I discovered that he was still warm.

I felt his pulse. There was no beat.

From his wound drops of blood trickled, and fell on the granite floor.

It was an awe-inspiring and revolting sight.

I cannot explain why, but I suddenly seized him by both arms and violently shook him. The body rose, leant sideways, and fell back into its former position, the head hanging lifelessly to one side.

I stood over him for a little time longer, and was on the point of going away when my attention was arrested by a slight trembling of his left eyelid. . . . I bent down over him, and attentively examined his face. . . . It began to twitch convulsively. The movements became more and more pronounced. Suddenly the left eye half-

opened. . . . An instant later the right lid trembled and lifted. . . . And both eyes . . . eyes of Rasputin – fixed themselves upon me with an expression of devilish hatred.

My blood froze in speechless horror. I was petrified . . . I wanted to run, to call for help; but my feet would not move, and no sound came from me.

I stood riveted to the floor as if in a nightmare.

Then the incredible happened. . . . With a violent movement Rasputin jumped to his feet. I was horror-stricken. The room resounded with a wild roar. His fingers, convulsively knotted, flashed through the air. . . . Like red-hot iron they grasped my shoulder and tried to grip me by the throat. His eyes were crossed, and obtruded terribly; he was foaming at the mouth.

And in a hoarse whisper he constantly repeated my name.

I cannot convey in words the fear which possessed me.

I tried to tear myself away, but his iron clutch held me with incredible strength. A terrible struggle ensued.

This dying, poisoned, and shot-ridden creature, raised by the powers of darkness to avenge his

destruction, inspired me with a feeling so terrifying, so ghastly, that the memory of it haunts me to this day.

At that moment I understood and felt in the fullest degree the real power of Rasputin. It seemed that the devil himself, incarnate in this muzhik, was holding me in vice-like fingers, never to let me go.

But with a supreme effort I tore myself free.

Rasputin groaned, and fell backwards, still gripping my epaulet, which he had torn off in the struggle. I looked at him; he lay all huddled up, motionless.

But again he stirred.

I rushed upstairs, calling on Purishkevich, who was in my study, to come to my aid.

'Quick! quick! the revolver! He is alive!' I shouted.

I myself was unarmed. I had given my revolver to the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich. At the door of my study I met Purishkevich, who had heard my desperate call for assistance.He was amazed to learn that Rasputin was still alive, and hurriedly took out his revolver from its holster. At that moment I heard sounds behind me. I realised that it was Rasputin, and in an instant

I found myself in my study. Here on the writing-table, I had left the loaded stick, which Maklakov had given me 'in case I might ever want it.' I seized it and rushed out.

Rasputin, on all-fours, was rapidly making his way up the staircase, bellowing and snorting like a wounded animal.

Suddenly he gathered himself up and made a final leap towards the wicket door leading to the courtyard.

In the full certainty that the door was locked, and that the key was in the possession of those who had left us, I stood on the staircase landing, firmly grasping the loaded stick.

But to my horror and surprise, the wicket-door opened, and Rasputin vanished through it into the darkness.

Purishkevich immediately rushed after him. Two shots rang out, resounding all over the yard.

I was beside myself with the idea that he might escape us. I rushed to the main entrance and ran along the Moika quayside, towards the court-yard, hoping, in case Purishkevich had missed him, to stop Rasputin at the gates.

There were three entrances to the courtyard,

and only the centre gates were unlocked. Through the railing I saw that it was just to those gates that Rasputin, led by instinct, was heading.

A third shot rang out, and a fourth. . . .

Rasputin stumbled and fell near a snow-heap. Purishkevich ran up to him, stood still for a few seconds, and evidently having decided that everything was now over, and that Rasputin was killed, with rapid steps turned back to the house. I called out to him, but he did not hear me.

After looking round and finding that the streets were empty, and that the shots had not attracted attention, I entered the courtyard and went up to the snow-mound where Rasputin was lying.

He showed no signs of life. On his left temple gaped a large wound, which, as I afterwards learned, was caused by Purishkevich's heel.

But in the meantime people were approaching me from two sides. A policeman came through the gates straight to the spot where Rasputin was lying, and my two servants ran towards me from the house. All three had been alarmed by the shots.

I stopped the policeman on the way. While speaking to him I was careful to keep my face

turned towards the snow-mound, so that he should be forced to turn his back on the spot where Rasputin was lying.

'Your Highness,' he said, recognising me, 'I heard shots. Has anything happened?'

'No, nothing serious. A stupid business. I had some friends with me to-night, and one of them drank rather too much, and began shooting and making all this disturbance. If anybody asks you what's been going on, just say that everything is all right.'

As I talked to him I led him towards the gates. I then returned to the spot where Rasputin was lying. My servants stood there. Purishkevich had told them to carry the body into the house. I went closer to the mound. Rasputin lay in a different position.

'My God, he is still alive,' I thought.

Terror seized me at the mere idea that he would again jump and seize me by the throat, and I hurried into the house.

I went to my study and called Purishkevich, but he was not there. That bloodcurdling whisper of my name rang in my ears all the time. I staggered to my dressing-room to get a drink of water. Purishkevich ran in.

'Here you are! I've been looking for you everywhere!' he exclaimed.

Everything swam before my eyes, and I thought I was about to fall. Purishkevich seized me by the arm and led me to the study.

We had hardly entered when my servant hurried in and announced that the policeman with whom I had spoken wanted to see me again, and that this time he had come through the main entrance, avoiding the courtyard.

It appeared that the shots had been heard at the district police-station, and that the policeman had been instructed to give an explanation by telephone. His first version had failed to satisfy the local authorities, and they insisted on being given all the details.

As soon as he caught sight of the policeman, Purishkevich quickly went up to him and, raising his voice, said:

'You have heard of Rasputin? – the man who has been betraying our country, our Emperor, and our soldiers at the front? He's been selling us to the Germans . . . do you hear?'

The policeman was struck dumb with surprise. He did not in the least understand what was wanted of him, and he remained silent.

'Do you know who I am?' Purishkevich went on, excitedly. 'I am Vladimir Mitrofanovich Purishkevich – Member of the Imperial Duma.

'Those shots which you heard killed Rasputin, and if you love your country and your Tsar – you must not breathe a word about it.'

I was horror-stricken at this conversation, but it was quite impossible to intervene and put an end to it. Everything had happened too quickly, and too unexpectedly. Purishkevich seemed to be seized by a kind of nervous exaltation. Obviously, he himself did not realise what he was saying.

'You have done a good deed. I will say nothing. But if they make me give evidence on oath, I shall say all that I know – there'll be no help for it. It's a sin to swear falsely,' the policeman answered at last.

With these words he left us. From his demeanour it was clear that what he had just learned had deeply affected him. Purishkevich ran after him.

When they had gone my servant told me that Rasputin's body had been carried from the courtyard to the bottom of the spiral staircase. I was feeling ill. My head was still reeling, and I

could scarcely move. But I pulled myself together, and mechanically taking up the loaded stick from the table, made my way out of the study.

On going downstairs, I saw Rasputin lying on the lower landing.

Blood was flowing freely from his many wounds. The chandelier at the top of the staircase lit up his head, and threw into full relief his mutilated and blood-spattered face.

I wanted to close my eyes. I wanted to get away as far as possible from this revolting scene. And yet I felt irresistibly drawn towards it. The impulse was so strong that I could not struggle against it.

My head was bursting asunder. My thoughts were confused. I was beside myself with rage and spite.

Some sort of paroxysm seized me.

I rushed at the body and began battering it with the loaded stick. . . . In my frenzy I hit anywhere.

At that moment all laws of God and man were set at naught.

Purishkevich subsequently told me that it was such à harrowing sight that he would never be able to forget it.

I lost consciousness.

In the meantime the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich, Captain Sukhotin and Dr. Lazovert returned in the closed car.

On hearing from Purishkevich all that had happened, they decided not to disturb me.

They wrapped the body in a cloth, placed it in the car, and drove off to Petrovski Island.

From a bridge there, the remains of Rasputin were thrown into the water.

CHAPTER XV

WHY A DOG WAS KILLED

When I finally regained consciousness I felt as if I had just emerged from a serious illness – as if, after a violent storm, I were drinking deep breaths of pure, fresh air.

My servant and I proceeded to obliterate all traces of blood which might betray us.

When everything incriminating had been cleaned and put in order, I went out into the courtyard to take further precautions.

Some sort of explanation for the shots had to be provided. My plan was a simple one; I would announce that one of my visitors, on leaving the house, had noticed a dog in the courtyard, and that being rather the worse for liquor, he had fired at it.

Accordingly, my servant took one of the dogs into an out-building in the inner courtyard and shot it. He then dragged its body over Rasputin's trail, so as to frustrate any subsequent blood-analysis, and threw it on the snow-mound where not so long before the dead *starets* had lain.

In case police dogs might be used, we poured

camphor on the bloodstains which were visible in the snow.

I then assembled all those of my household who had been chance witnesses of what had happened, and explained to them its significance.

They listened in silence, and from their expressions it was clear that they were all determined to say nothing whatever about it.

It was already nearly 5 a.m. when I left the house for the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich's palace.

The feeling that the first step towards Russia's salvation had been taken filled me with energy and inspired me with an unclouded belief in the future.

On entering my room at the palace, I found my brother-in-law, Prince Theodore Alexandrovich, there. He had been sitting up all night expecting my return.

'Thank God you've come at last! . . . Well, what has happened?'

'Rasputin is killed, but I can't say anything more just now. I'm too tired.

Foreseeing that on the following morning I should be interrogated, and that measures would

perhaps be taken against me, I felt that I should have need of all my strength. I went to bed and fell into a deep sleep.

CHAPTER XVI

ENTHUSIASM AT ST. PETERSBURG

I SLEPT soundly until ten o'clock.

I had hardly opened my eyes when I was told that the Chief of the Police of the Kazan district, General Grigoriev, wanted to see me on very urgent business.

I hurriedly rose, dressed, and went into the study, where General Grigoriev was awaiting me.

'Your visit,' I said, 'is probably connected with shots which were heard in the courtyard of our house?'

'Yes, I have come to learn from you at first-hand full details of what occurred. Was not Rasputin a guest here yesterday evening?'

'Rasputin? He never visits me,' I replied.

'The shots heard from your courtyard are nevertheless associated with his disappearance, and the Prefect of Police has ordered me to make immediate inquiry into what happened at your house last night.'

This association of the shots on the Moika with the disappearance of Rasputin foreshadowed grave complications.

I had carefully to weigh and estimate the effect

of every word I used before I could give any answer to the question which was put to me.

'But what is the source of your information that Rasputin has disappeared?' I asked.

General Grigoriev told me that early in the morning an inspector, accompanied by the policeman on duty in the neighbourhood of my house, had come to him and reported that at 3 a.m. a number of shots had been fired. The policeman had inspected his beat, but had found everything quiet, the streets empty, and the *dvorniki* asleep at the gates. Suddenly someone had hailed him with the words, 'Come quickly; the Prince wants you.' The policeman had complied, and had been conducted to my study. There he had seen me, with another person. The latter had come towards him and asked:

'Do you know me?'

'No, sir, I do not,' the policeman had replied.

'Have you ever heard of Purishkevich?'

'Yes, sir.'

'I am Purishkevich. Do you love the Tsar and your Fatherland?'

'Yes, sir.'

'If you love them, swear that you will tell no one; Rasputin is dead!'

After this conversation the policeman had been conducted out of the house. He had at first returned to his post, but later, out of fear, he had decided to report the incident to his superiors.

I listened attentively, and tried to preserve an expression of utter surprise. All those in the plot had solemnly sworn not to divulge our secret, and I was bound by this promise. We had then hoped to conceal all evidence of the assassination; the political situation demanded that Rasputin's disappearance should remain a mystery.

'What an incredible story!' I exclaimed, when General Grigoriev had finished. 'How tiresome that just because this policeman did not understand what was said to him, so much unpleasantness may arise. . . . I will tell you at once, in detail, what really happened.

'Last night a number of friends and acquaintances came to supper with me. Among them were the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich, M. Purishkevich, and a number of officers. A good deal of wine was consumed, and everyone was in excellent humour.

'When my guests began to leave, I suddenly heard two shots from the direction of the courtyard. I went out and saw one of our yard dogs

lying dead on the snow. One of my friends, excited by wine, had fired his revolver as he left the house and had accidentally killed the animal.

'Fearing that the shots might have attracted the attention of the police, I sent for the policeman on duty, in order to explain them to him. By this time all the guests had departed with the exception of Purishkevich. When the policeman entered, Purishkevich hurried towards him and began speaking with him in an undertone. I noticed that the policeman became confused. I do not know what was actually said, but from your words it is now clear to me that Purishkevich, who was also rather excited, spoke of the dog that had been killed, and, comparing it with Rasputin, regretted that it had not been the *starets* instead. The policeman obviously did not grasp his meaning. . . . That's the only explanation I can suggest for this misunderstanding. I sincerely hope that everything will soon be cleared up satisfactorily; and if it is true that Rasputin has vanished, I trust that his disappearance will not be associated with the shots at our house.'

'Yes, it's all clear to me now. But tell me, Prince, who were your guests other than the

Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich and M. Purishkevich?'

'I must decline to answer that question. The whole of this affair, trivial as it is, may take a serious turn. They are my friends. . . . There are their families to think of; their official positions might be prejudiced in spite of their innocence.'

'I am very grateful, Prince, for your information,' said the General. 'I shall drive straight to the Prefect and report to him all you have told me. Your explanation clears up the incident, and completely guarantees you from unpleasant consequences of any kind.'

I requested General Grigoriev to tell the Prefect that I would like to see him, and asked him to let me know at what time I could be received.

As soon as he had gone, I was called to the telephone. It was M.

'What have you done with Grigori Efimovich?' she asked.

'With Grigori Efimovich? What a strange question?'

'What! Wasn't he with you yesterday?' she exclaimed, in alarm. 'Then where is he? Come and see me quickly, for God's sake! I am in a terrible state of mind.'

The prospect of that conversation with M. oppressed me beyond words. What could I say to one who was so genuinely attached to me, who had such confidence in me, never doubting a single word that I uttered?

How should I look her in the eyes when she asked: 'What have you done with Grigori Efimovich?'

But I had to go, and within half-an-hour I arrived in the G.s' drawing-room.

An atmosphere of distress pervaded the house. On all sides there were anxious and tear-stained faces. M. was hardly recognisable. She ran towards me and, in a voice trembling with emotion, said:

'Tell me, for God's sake, where is Grigori Efimovich? What have you done with him? They say that he was killed in your house, and that you are his murderer.'

I tried to calm her, and told her in detail the story that I had prepared.

'Oh, how terrible it all is! Both the Empress and Anya[1] are sure that he was killed during the night, and that it was done in your house, and by you.'

'Ring up Tsarskoe at once. If the Empress will

[1] Vyrubova.

receive me, I will explain everything to her. Ring up as quickly as possible,' I insisted.

M. did as I asked. She was informed that the Empress would see me.

Just as I was leaving in order to proceed straight to the Empress, M. called me back. Apart from her alarm at the disappearance of Rasputin, her face now showed traces of a new anxiety.

'Don't go to Tsarskoe, don't go!' she implored. 'Something dreadful will happen to you. They will never believe that you had nothing to do with it. They are all in a terrible state of mind. They say that I've betrayed them. Oh! why did I listen to you? I oughtn't to have telephoned. It was a great mistake. Oh, what have I done?'

Her anxiety on my behalf and her whole attitude towards me showed such affectionate devotion that it cost me a supreme effort to restrain myself from confessing everything to her. It was torture to me to have to deceive her; she was so kind, and she trusted me so implicitly.

She came close up to me, and timidly looking at me with her kind, innocent eyes, made the sign of the Cross over me.

'God preserve you! I will pray for you,' she said in a low voice.

Suddenly a bell rang. It was a telephone call from Tsarskoe; Vyrubova was speaking.

The Empress was not feeling well, and could not receive me. I was to send her a written report of all I knew concerning the disappearance of Rasputin.

'Thank God! I'm so relieved that you are not going there,' said M.

I bade her good-bye and went out into the street. I had only taken a few steps when I met one of my friends of the *Corps des Pages*. He ran up to me in great excitement.

'Felix!' he exclaimed. 'Have you heard the news. Rasputin is killed!'

'Impossible! Who killed him?'

'They say it happened at the gypsies, but nobody yet knows who did it.'

'I hope to God it's true,' I said.

He went on his way, very pleased with himself at having been the first to give me such a sensational piece of news, and I went back to the palace, expecting to find a reply from the Prefect of Police.

The reply was awaiting me. General Balk would see me immediately.

When I arrived at his office I found the place

in a great turmoil. The General was in his room, sitting at a writing-table. He looked very worried.

I told him that I had come in order to clear up the misunderstanding that had arisen over Purishkevich's words. I added that I was anxious to lose no time in doing so, since I was proceeding on leave that evening for the Crimea, where my family were awaiting me; I did not wish to be detained in St. Petersburg by interrogations and various other formalities.

The Prefect replied that the explanations which I had given to General Grigoriev were entirely satisfactory, and that he did not foresee any difficulties over my departure, but he had to inform me that he had received orders from the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna to search our house on the Moika, in view of the suspicious shots in the night and of rumours of my association with the disappearance of Rasputin.

'My wife is a niece of the Emperor,' I said. 'Members of the Imperial Family, and their residences, are inviolable; and measures against them cannot be taken except by order of His Majesty the Emperor himself.'

The Prefect was obliged to agree with me on this point, and in my presence he at once gave

instructions, by telephone, countermanding the search.

This greatly relieved me. I had been obsessed by the feeling that in getting the rooms in order overnight a good deal had escaped us, and that it was therefore necessary at all costs to postpone any such search until after we had carried out a thorough inspection and had removed every trace of what had really occurred.

I took my leave of General Balk and returned to the Moika, breathing more freely now that this difficulty had been overcome.

My fears turned out to be well-founded. On examining the dining-room and stairs by daylight I noticed brown stains on the floor and carpets. My servants and I removed every trace that was to be found. We worked with a will, and soon completed our task.

But we were unable to remove stains which were visible near the entrance to the courtyard, where the blood had soaked into the stone flags. Our only resource would be to explain that they had been caused by the dead dog.

But suppose they should make a search after all, and should make a chemical analysis of these stains? Matters might then take a very serious

turn. It was essential therefore that we should find some means of concealing these traces.

We accordingly decided to paint them over with oil-colour of the same tint as the stones, and to cover the whole with a thick layer of snow.

It seemed that we had now done everything possible to throw off the examining authorities on a false scent.

It was already two o'clock in the afternoon, and I went to lunch with the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich. He told me in general terms how they had disposed of Rasputin's body.

On returning to the Moika in the closed car, the Grand Duke had found me unconscious. His first impulse was to remain with me until I recovered. But there was no time to spare, for dawn was approaching.

Rasputin's body, closely wrapped in a cloth and tightly bound with cord, was placed in the car. The Grand Duke acted as chauffeur. Sukhotin sat beside him, and Purishkevich, with Dr. Lazovert and my servant, sat behind. They stopped as soon as they reached the Petrovski bridge. The sentry's box stood out in the distance. Fearing that the noise of the motor and the powerful rays of the lamps might attract attention, the

Grand Duke stopped the engine and extinguished the lights.

Complete confusion reigned. They were on edge with excitement. In their nervous haste they omitted to attach weights to the body before throwing it into a large fissure in the ice, and they even failed to remove the outer garments.[1]

To crown these misfortunes, the car at first refused to start. But after a brief delay the Grand Duke managed to set it in motion. In turning, he drove quite near to the sentry-box. Its occupant was fast asleep. The party drove back without further incident.

In conclusion, the Grand Duke expressed the opinion that in all likelihood the body had already been carried down to the sea by the river current.

I then gave him an account of my adventures and conversations during that morning.

Captain Sukhotin came in after lunch. We asked him to go and find Purishkevich, and to bring him to us at the Palace. That evening Purishkevich was leaving for the front[2] with his

[1] They had not had time to remove all the clothing and burn it, as had been originally decided.

[2] Purishkevich, protected by his popularity in the army and by his title of member of the Duma, returned to the front that evening.

hospital train, and I was leaving for the Crimea; while on the following day the Grand Duke was to proceed to G.H.Q.

It was essential, therefore, that we should all meet, and agree upon a common line of action in the event of the detention, arrest, or cross-examination of any one of us.

After discussion we agreed to uphold the explanations which I had already given to Grigoriev, to M. and to the Prefect of Police. Whatever happened, whatever new proofs might be found against us, we were to maintain this attitude.

We had taken the first step. The way was now open for those who realised all that had been happening and were in a position to continue that struggle against Rasputinism which we had begun. For the time being we ought to stand aside.

And on this decision we parted.

CHAPTER XVII

INTERROGATORIES AND DEPOSITIONS

On leaving the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich's palace, I returned home to Moika 94 to discover whether anything fresh had arisen. When I arrived there I was told that in the course of the day all my servants had been cross-examined. I did not know the result of these inquiries, but the accounts which my servants gave of them tended to reassure me.

Nevertheless, I did not like the look of things. I was afraid that I might be delayed by various formalities and so prevented from being with my family at Christmas-time. I resolved, therefore, to call on the Minister of Justice, M. Makarov, to ascertain how matters stood.

The Ministry of Justice, like the Prefecture of Police, was in a state of great excitement. The Minister was in conference with the Public Prosecutor, whom I met coming out of the door of M. Makarov's room as I went in. He regarded me with unconcealed curiosity as we passed.

I had not met M. Makarov before, and I liked him at first sight. He was a thin, elderly man with

grey hair and beard, a kindly appearance, and a soft voice.

I explained the object of my visit, and at his request repeated, from the very beginning, with full details, the story which by now I had learned by heart.

When I reached that part of it which bore reference to Purishkevich's conversation with the policeman, M. Makarov interrupted me with the words:

'I know Vladimir Mitrofanovich very well. He never drinks. If I am not mistaken, he is even a member of the Temperance League.'

'I can assure you,' I answered, 'that on this occasion Vladimir Mitrofanovich betrayed both himself and the League of which you state he is a member. He found it difficult to refuse wine; I was giving a house-warming and we all pressed him to drink with us. As he was unaccustomed to it, a very few glasses sufficed to affect him.'

When I had finished my explanation, I asked M. Makarov whether my servants were immune from further cross-examination and unpleasantness, as they all felt rather anxious, in view of my departure that evening for the Crimea.

The Minister reassured me on this point. He

said that in all likelihood the police authorities would make no further inquiries, and that for his part he would neither sanction a search of the house, nor attach any importance to rumours or gossip in the town.

Just as I was departing, I asked the Minister whether I might leave St. Petersburg. He replied in the affirmative, and once again expressed his regret that I should have been subjected to so much trouble and unpleasantness through such a misunderstanding.

From the Ministry of Justice I went to my uncle, M. Rodzianko, the President of the Imperial Duma. He and his wife had known beforehand of our resolve to put an end to Rasputin, and they were impatiently awaiting a full account of what had happened. On entering their drawing-room I noticed that they were both agitated and were discussing something or other with raised voices. My aunt came up to me with tears in her eyes; she embraced me and made the sign of the Cross over me. My uncle also welcomed me in his voice of thunder, and embraced me.

I particularly appreciated such warmth of affection. Far away from my own people, com-

pletely alone, I was passing through a very difficult period. This fatherly attitude cheered and calmed me.

But I could not stay long with them, as my train was leaving at nine o'clock that evening, and I had not yet packed. I gave them a brief account of the assassination and then took my leave.

'We shall now stand aside and leave further action to others,' I said, as we parted. 'Please God that by common endeavour the Emperor may be given an opportunity of realising the truth before it is too late. It would be difficult to imagine a more favourable moment.'

'I am convinced that the assassination of Rasputin will be regarded as a patriotic deed,' replied Rodzianko, 'and that everyone will unite to save Russia from ruin.'

From the Rodziankos' I went to the palace of the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich.

As I entered the hall the door-keeper informed me that a lady to whom I had given an appointment for seven o'clock was already awaiting me in the study.

I had not given any such appointment. This unlooked-for visit greatly surprised me, and I

asked for a description of the lady's appearance. I learnt that she was dressed in black; and that her face could hardly be seen, as she was wearing a very thick veil.

My misgivings prompted me to pass into my bedroom, to examine my mysterious visitor.

What was my astonishment, on looking through the chink in the folding doors, to recognise one of the most fervent admirers of Rasputin!

I called the door-keeper and instructed him to tell my uninvited guest that I was out and should be returning very late that evening. I quickly packed and then went up to dinner.

On the stairs I met my friend Oswald Rayner, an English officer whom I had known since our Oxford days. He realised the truth of all that had happened and was very anxious on my behalf. I assured him that up to the present everything was well.

At dinner there were the three elder brothers of my wife, who were to accompany me to the Crimea, their tutor – Mr. Stuart, Mlle. Evreinova – one of the Ladies-in-waiting to the Grand Duchess Xenia Alexandrovna, Rayner, and a number of others.

They were all excited by the news of the mys-

terious disappearance of Rasputin, and the most unlikely rumours were discussed. Some of those present did not believe in the death of the *starets;* they maintained that he was alive and that everything said to the contrary was sheer invention. Others quoted 'reliable sources,' even 'eye-witnesses,' in support of their assertion that he had been killed during a debauch at the gypsies. Others, again, confidently announced that he had been killed in my house on the Moika, and that I had participated in his murder. The less credulous among them thought it hardly probable that I had taken an active part in the assassination itself, but held that in any case I was aware of all the details; and they plied me with questions. Searching glances were directed at me from all sides, in the hope of reading the truth in my face. But I kept calm, and joined in the general rejoicing, and thanks to my demeanour these suspicions were gradually allayed.

In the meantime the telephone-bell rang incessantly. Throughout the whole of St. Petersburg my name was associated with the disappearance of Rasputin. I was rung up by relations, by friends, by members of the Duma, and by representatives and directors of various industries and

factories, who announced that their employees intended to form a guard for me in case of need.

To one and all I replied that the rumours of my participation in the murder of Rasputin were false, and that I knew nothing about it.

My train was due to start in half-an-hour. After saying good-bye to the rest of the company I entered the car with my brothers-in-law – Prince Andrew, Prince Theodore, and Prince Nikita, their tutor, and Rayner.

On arrival at the station I noticed a large force of the Palace Police collected on the steps of the main entrance. This astonished me. 'Had an order been issued for my arrest?' I wondered. We left the car and went up the steps. When I was level with the colonel of the gendarmes he came up to me, and in an excited voice said something quite unintelligible.

'Could you speak a little louder, Colonel?' I said. 'I can't hear what you say.'

He pulled himself together and, raising his voice, said:

'By Her Majesty's orders, you are forbidden to leave St. Petersburg. You must return to the Palace and remain there until further instructions.'

'I'm sorry to hear that,' I replied; and turning

to my companions, I repeated to them the Imperial command.

My arrest came as a complete surprise to them. Prince Andrew and Prince Theodore decided that they would not go to the Crimea, but would remain with me; Prince Nikita alone should leave, accompanied by his tutor.

We went to see them off. The police followed us. They seemed afraid that I might board the train and get away.

We presented an unusual spectacle as we proceeded along the platform. The public stood still, their eyes turned upon us with curiosity.

When I entered the carriage to say a few words to Prince Nikita, the police again showed uneasiness. I calmed their fears by telling them that I had no intention of evading them, but simply wanted to say good-bye to those who were leaving us.

The train started, and we went back to the car.

'It is strange to feel oneself arrested!' I thought. 'I wonder what is in store for me?'

Everyone at home was astonished at our return and could not understand what it meant.

I was tired out by the events of the day, and as soon as I reached my room I lay down. I asked

Prince Theodore and Rayner to stay with me for a while.

While we were talking Prince Andrew ran into the room and announced the arrival of the Grand Duke Nicholas Mikhailovich.

This late visit forboded ill for me. He had apparently come to find out from me full details of all that had happened, and he had arrived just at a moment when I felt tired, wanted to sleep, and was not in the mood for such conversations.

There were strange contradictions in the character of the Grand Duke Nicholas Mikhailovich. A learned historian, a man of great intellect and independence of mind, in his dealings with people he at times adopted a tone of excessive banter. He was inclined to be garrulous, and to speak of matters on which he should have preserved silence.

He detested Rasputin, and fully realised how harmful he was to Russia. In his political outlook he was an extreme Liberal. He sharply criticised current events; he had even suffered for such free expression of his thoughts, and had previously been dismissed from St. Petersburg to Grushevka, his estate in the Province of Kherson.

Prince Theodore and Rayner had hardly closed the door behind them when the Grand Duke entered from the opposite side of the room. He turned to me with the words:

'Well, now, tell me; what have you been up to?'

I feigned astonishment and said:

'Surely you don't believe these rumours about me? Why it's all a crass misunderstanding. I've really nothing whatever to do with it.'

'Tell that to others, not to me! I know everything, every detail – even the names of the women who were at the party!'

His last words showed me that he knew absolutely nothing, and that he was merely pretending to be well-informed in order that he might trip me up. I told him exactly the same story of my house-warming party, and the shooting of the dog.

Apparently he believed my tale, but to preserve himself against error, he smiled knowingly at me as he left.

It was clear that he not only knew nothing, but that he was intensely annoyed at having failed to get any information out of me.

After he had gone Prince Andrew, Prince Theodore and Rayner rejoined me. I told them

that in the morning I should move to the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich's palace in order to be with him until our fate was decided. I fully explained to them what answers they were to give if they should be cross-questioned. They promised to follow my instructions to the letter, and then bade me good-night and left.

The events of the previous night passed before my eyes, one thought succeeding another, until at last my head grew heavy with fatigue, and I fell asleep.

CHAPTER XVIII

AT THE PALACE OF THE GRAND DUKE DMITRI PAVLOVICH

EARLY the following morning I moved to the palace of the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich. He was very surprised to see me; he had felt certain that I had left for the Crimea on the previous evening.

I told him of my arrest and of my decision to come and stay with him in view of the complications that had arisen, and of the possibility of measures being taken against us both. I also recounted to him my conversations with the various people whom I had met. In his turn he told me all that he had done during the previous day. In the evening he had gone to the Mikhailovski Theatre, but he had been obliged to leave, as he was warned that the audience was about to give him an ovation. On returning home from the theatre he had learned that at Tsarskoe Selo he was credited with having taken a leading part in the assassination. He had then telephoned to the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, and requested her to receive him; but she had categorically refused.

After chatting a little longer with him I went to the room which had been allotted to me. I sent for the newspapers and went through them, looking for references to what had occurred. There was nothing beyond the bald statement that 'on the night of the 16th – 17th of December the *starets*, Grigori Rasputin,' had been killed.

The morning passed quietly, but at about one o'clock, just as we were having lunch, General Maximovich, A.D.C. to the Emperor, telephoned to the Grand Duke to inform him that he was under arrest by order of the Empress, and was requested not to leave his palace. He added that he would shortly arrive in person, and communicate further details.

The Grand Duke returned to the dining-room very much perturbed by this conversation.

'Felix,' he said, 'I am arrested by the orders of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna. . . . She has no right to take this step; the Emperor alone can issue such an order.'

General Maximovich arrived in the midst of our discussion. He was shown into the study. When the Grand Duke entered the room the General met him with the words:

'Her Majesty requests Your Imperial Highness not to leave your palace. . . .'

'What does this mean? – Arrest?'

'No, it is not arrest, but Her Majesty nevertheless insists that you should not leave your palace.'

The Grand Duke replied, with deliberation:

'I maintain that this is arrest! Inform Her Majesty that I submit to her command.'

With these words he left the study.

In the course of the day the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich was visited in turn by nearly all the members of the Imperial House who were in St. Petersburg at that time. They were deeply concerned over his arrest and over the fact that the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna had so far exceeded her powers as to give orders that a member of the Imperial Family should be deprived of his liberty on the mere supposition that he was a party to the murder of Rasputin.

On the same day the Grand Duke received a telegram from the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna at Moscow, again associating my name with the disappearance of Rasputin. Aware of the ties of friendship between us, and not suspecting that he himself had taken an active part in the destruction of the *starets*, the Grand Duchess

requested him to tell me that she was praying for me and blessed my patriotic action.

This telegram seriously compromised us. Protopopov intercepted it, and sent a copy of it to Tsarskoe Selo to the Empress, who immediately concluded that the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna also was in the plot.

The telephone-bell rang incessantly, and the person who rang up most frequently was the Grand Duke Nicholas Mikhailovich; he gave us the most incredible news. He came to see us several times a day. He affected to know everything, and tried to trip us up at every turn. Seeking by every possible means to discover the whole truth, he pretended to be our ally, in the hope that we should heedlessly commit ourselves.

He was not satisfied with conversations on the telephone and his constant visits to us. He took a most active part in the search for Rasputin's body.

During one of his visits he incidentally informed us that the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna was fully persuaded of our complicity in the death of Rasputin and was demanding that we should be shot out of hand, but that everyone was restraining her. Even Protopopov had

advised her to await the Emperor's arrival from General Headquarters. A telegram had been despatched to the Emperor, and he was expected at any moment.

On the same day that we heard this news from the Grand Duke Nicholas Mikhailovich. M. communicated to me the no less unpleasant information that attempts were afoot against our lives, and advised us to take all possible precautions. It appeared that on the previous evening she had been an involuntary witness of how, in Rasputin's flat, twenty of his most ardent followers had sworn to avenge him.

It was a particularly exhausting day for both the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich and myself, and we felt relieved when all our visitors had left.

It had been difficult to keep a constant guard on ourselves in the presence of others, to preserve our serenity and to endeavour, by our own calm attitude towards events and rumours, to dispel all suspicion of our participation in the murder.

Now that we were alone we talked for a long time, exchanging our impressions of all that we had heard.

I had never before known the Grand Duke so

simple and so sincere. The horror through which we had lived had left a deep mark on his sensitive nature, and I felt happy to be at his side, sharing his enforced solitude during this period beset with anxiety.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BODY RECOVERED

On the morning of the following day, December 19th, the Emperor arrived from G.H.Q.

Those in attendance upon him said that on receiving the news of Rasputin's death his mood was more cheerful than since the outbreak of war.

He himself evidently felt and believed that the disappearance of the *starets* had freed him from those heavy fetters which he had lacked the strength to cast off. But with his return to Tsarskoe Selo his mood abruptly changed, and once again he fell under the influence of those who surrounded him.

All sorts of rumours continued to circulate in the town. All classes of society lived on them, believed in them, and were deeply affected by them.

News of our impending execution reached the workmen of large factories, and caused great fermentation among them. They held meetings at which they passed resolutions to the effect that they would save us, and would organise a secret guard to protect us.

Although we were on the footing of persons

under arrest, and except for members of the Imperial Family no one was supposed to be admitted into the Sergei Palace, our friends and acquaintances nevertheless managed to visit us. Officers of various regiments came, with the assurance that their commands to a man were ready to defend us. They had been deeply affected by the event, and submitted to the Grand Duke various plans based on decisive action, to which he could not, of course, agree.

On this day we were visited by an unusual number of people. Members of the Imperial House had been arriving at the palace since the early morning. On going into the study we found them assembled there, and they inundated us with questions. On the previous day their attention had been so entirely preoccupied by the arrest of the Grand Duke that they did not discuss anything else. Now, however, they wanted to know full details of Rasputin's mysterious disappearance – but they only heard from us the same story.

The Grand Duke Nicholas Mikhailovich arrived just before dinner and told us that Rasputin's body had been found in an ice-hole below the Petrovski Bridge.

In the evening General Maximovich returned,

to inform the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich, in the name of the Emperor this time, that he was under arrest.

We passed an uneasy night. At about 3 a.m. we were awakened with a warning that suspicious persons were in the palace, having gained access by the back entrance. They had explained to the servants that they had been sent to guard the premises, but as they had no written authority they were expelled, and palace servants were posted at all the entrances.

On December 20th almost the whole of the Imperial Family assembled again for tea. They reopened their discussion of the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich's arrest, now officially confirmed by the Emperor. Not one of them was reconciled to such treatment of a member of the Imperial Family. They regarded it as an affair of State, and as an event of the gravest significance.

It did not occur to anyone that there were more serious questions at issue – that on the Emperor's actions during the next few days hung the destiny of the country, the fate of the Throne and dynasty, and the outcome of the war, which could not end in victory without complete harmony between the Supreme Power and the people.

THE BODY RECOVERED

The end of Rasputin had brought into the foreground the question of the end of Rasputinism, the necessity of a new trend in politics which were now or never to be disentangled from criminal intrigues.

After the members of the Imperial House had left, General Laiming, the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich's former tutor, came in. He lived in the palace, and often visited us. He gave us full details of the recovery of Rasputin's body from the river.

The official inquiry into the disappearance of Rasputin had been entrusted to Colonel Globachev, Chief of the Secret Police. He informed the Public Prosecutor at the St. Petersburg Courts of Justice that after a thorough search, 'a black snow-boot, size number eleven, covered with recent blood-stains,' had been found on the Petrovski Bridge. This snow-boot was taken to Rasputin's flat, where it was recognised as the property of the murdered man. Further, the snow on the bridge bore numerous footmarks and traces of motor tyres right up to the parapet itself.

Thus, according to Colonel Globachev, the clues to the discovery of the murderers should be sought not at Moika No. 94, but at the opposite end of the town – on the Petrovski Bridge.

Following on this report, further searches were made, and the Petrovski Bridge was re-examined. All the higher officials of the administrative and of the judicial world repaired there. The bare enumeration of the posts which they occupied is in itself proof of the importance in which Rasputin was held, and shows what a 'national disaster' his death seemed in the eyes of the Government and of the Supreme Power.

At the inspection of the bridge – according to the official report on the murder of Rasputin – there were present; 'The senior officials of the Ministry of Justice, with the Minister at their head; the Public Prosecutor of the St. Petersburg Courts of Justice; the Deputy Public Prosecutor; the Examining Magistrate for cases of special gravity; and a representative of the Ministry of the Interior.'

All these important State officials concentrated their attention and zeal on solving the problem which mystified them.

They interrogated the policeman on duty, the watchman at an ale-house near by, the watchman from the Home for Aged Artists of the Imperial Theatres . . . but all to no purpose.

There followed a further and most minute

search. On this occasion a fresh clue was found – a piece of matting bearing traces of blood. Further, attention was drawn to the fact that at one point on the bridge-railing the snow had been displaced in such a way as to justify the assumption that some object had lain there. This circumstance tended to confirm the opinion that the murder of Rasputin must have taken place here, on the Petrovski Bridge, a deserted spot on the very outskirts of the town – and nowhere else; certainly not on the Moika, which was at the opposite end of St. Petersburg.

There were two main reasons which impelled the examining authorities to favour this theory.

In the first place, they maintained that if the body had been conveyed through the streets, traces of blood would have been discovered somewhere along the route taken. Yet the whole town had been searched and no bloodstains had been found.

Secondly, there was the discovery of the victim's snow-boot. It could hardly be supposed that before the body was conveyed from the actual scene of the crime it was clothed so completely that even the snow-boots were not forgotten.

The examining authorities accordingly reconstructed the crime on the following lines: Rasputin was killed on the bridge itself. His body lay over the balustrade for a time, and was then thrown down into the ice-hole, just opposite the spot where the bloodstained piece of matting had been found, and where the snow had been brushed away from the railing.

Divers were immediately summoned. The bottom of the river was searched for two-and-a-half hours, but the body was not discovered.

The divers maintained that the current of the Neva, exceptionally strong at this point, might have carried it under the ice far beyond the Petrovski Bridge. Their work was interrupted for a time by the heavy frosts. The bridge was roped off, and a guard was placed at its approaches.

But in the meantime, one of the river police, while making a hole in the ice, chanced to notice the sleeve of a beaver fur coat frozen to the under surface.

He promptly reported this to his superior officer. Orders were given to cut through the ice, and a quarter of an hour afterwards the body of Rasputin was taken from the water, having been

found at a point about thirty *sazhens*[1] distant from the Petrovski Bridge.

The body was covered with such a thick layer of ice that it was difficult to recognise the features.

When this coating of ice had been carefully removed, the examining authorities saw the mutilated remains of Rasputin. The head of the dead man was found to be broken in a number of places, and tufts of hair had been torn out here and there. In its fall from the bridge the body had probably struck head-foremost against the edge of the ice-hole. The beard had frozen to the clothing; on the face and chest there were clots of congealed blood; one eye was blackened.

The arms and legs were tightly bound round with rope, and the left fist was tightly clenched. The body was wrapped in a beaver coat thrown over the shoulders. The loose sleeves, floating up and freezing to the ice, had revealed the presence of the corpse.

As soon as an official report of this discovery had been drawn up, the body was covered with sacking and removed to a wooden shed on the river-bank.

In the meantime, there arrived at the Petrovski

[1] A *sazhen* is equivalent to 7 feet.

Bridge the Minister of the Interior, M. Protopopov; the Officer in Command of the St. Petersburg Military District; the Officer in Command of the Secret Police, and various administrative officials. The Public Prosecutor's Office was instructed to draw up a full report on the external appearance of the body and on the circumstances attending its discovery.

The Deputy Public Prosecutor, M. Galkin, who was entrusted with this task, temporarily transferred his office to a private house in the neighbourhood of the Petrovski Bridge.

At 11 am. the examining authorities, accompanied by a number of high officials, proceeded to the shed and began a minute inspection of the body.

After the clothes had been removed, two wounds caused by fire-arms were observed; one in the region of the breast, near the heart, the other in the neck. The doctors stated that each of them would undoubtedly have been fatal.

A domestic servant was summoned to identify the body, and recognised it as being that of Grigori Rasputin of No. 64 Gorokhovaya Street, who had disappeared, leaving no trace, on the night of December 16th.

At midday Rasputin's two daughters, and the fiancé of one of them, Lieutenant Papkhadze, were admitted. The daughters applied for permission to have the body removed to their home, but the authorities refused.

The news that Rasputin's remains had been found spread through the town like wildfire. A file of carriages and cars streamed to the Petrovski Bridge, but the authorities gave strict instructions that no one should be admitted into the shed where the body was lying.

Soon afterwards a wooden coffin was brought in, and the body was placed in it. Before this was done, however, it was twice photographed; first with its clothing, and then without. The ropes with which the legs and arms had been bound, the beaver coat, and certain other articles were sealed up and filed as material evidence.

The body, in its coffin, was then taken to the Chesma Asylum for further examination.

Long before the arrival of the persons who had been appointed to conduct the autopsy, the whole of the district in which the Asylum is situated was surrounded by a strong force of police, mounted and on foot.

The post-mortem continued until nearly 1 a.m.

and was conducted in the presence of rows of prominent officials, including a representative of the Ministry of the Interior. The operation was performed by one of the professors of the Judicial Department of the Military Medical Academy, assisted by a number of police doctors.

For two hours the body was submitted to a most minute examination. Apart from the two wounds caused by the shots, a number of livid bruises were discovered.

In the stomach was found a ductile mass, dark-brown in colour . . . but its analysis was never made, for the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna commanded that the examination should cease.

It is not known what other orders were given, but at about 2 a.m. General Grigoriev, who had been present at the autopsy, directed that a car should be sent to the Asylum. In the meantime, a richly-decorated oak coffin had been brought to the mortuary. The remains were placed in it, and conveyed in the car to a destination unknown. The route was divulged to no one; Rasputin's body was removed by agents of the Secret Police.

CHAPTER XX

DISAPPOINTMENT

On the evening of December 21st, we were astonished by the sudden appearance of soldiers at the Sergei Palace. We learned that they were a guard sent by the military authorities by order of the President of the Council of Ministers, who had been informed that Rasputin's adherents were preparing an attempt on our lives.

At almost the same moment, another 'guard.' of a totally different kind, sought admission. An agent of the secret police presented himself to General Laiming, alleging that he had been sent by M. Protopopov, Minister of the Interior. He declared that M. Protopopov had received information that the life of the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich was threatened, and had instructed him, with the men under his command, to guard the palace.

The Grand Duke, on hearing of this, said that he had no need of any Protopopov guards, and asked General Laiming to insist on their producing papers in proof of their assertion. They had no documents of any kind, and were immediately turned away from the palace. This,

however, did not prevent them from keeping a watch on us from without, and from noting everyone who entered and left the building.

Not content with their observations from outside, Rasputin's adherents made fresh attempts to gain access to us. On the second floor of the palace, which communicated with the lower floor[1] by a circular staircase, the Anglo-Russian Hospital was housed. Most suspicious individuals began to appear there, under pretext of visiting the wounded. Lady Sybil Grey, who was in charge of the hospital, advised us to close the staircase entrance, and to place a sentry at that point. We acted on her suggestion.

We seemed to be living in a beleaguered fortress; we could only follow events from a distance.

We read the papers, and listened to the accounts and conversations of our visitors.

Each proffered his own opinion of what was happening. We encountered almost invariably a fear of any bold initiative, a passive awaiting of what the morrow would bring.

Those who were in a position to act were too timorous to come out into the open. They seemed

[1]The Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich at this time occupied the lower floor.

to be counting on some chance intervention which should decide the destiny of Russia.

Even those who served their country and Emperor in the name of duty, envisaged that duty only in the narrow frame of the routine of a ministry or government department. In spite of their assiduity in the performance of their official tasks, they lacked the breadth of view which would have enabled them to realise the supreme importance of the moment; they did not venture to overstep the recognised limits of their authority. Devotion to the Emperor, as felt by the most sincere among them, meant little more than a desire to please him, a blind obedience tempered with the fear of compromising themselves by association with anything that savoured of opposition.

It is a characteristic fact that the handful of men who were in positions of influence in the Government independently of Rasputin's aid, and had nothing whatever in common with him, were afraid to visit us at the Sergei Palace.

Yet it was only by the combined action of all who by their parentage or position could influence the Emperor, that successful results could be attained.

If the Emperor, on learning of the death of the *starets*, travelled from G.H.Q. in a cheerful frame of mind, it necessarily follows that he realised Rasputin's harmful influence in Russia.

But he was unable to maintain this attitude after he had regained the atmosphere of Tsarskoe Selo, where feelings ran so high against us that we were threatened with the severest form of punishment, as was reported to us by so many of our friends.

In such circumstances what could be effected by people who singly expressed their opinions to the Emperor and were then content to stand aside, conscious of having done their duty?

Firmly convinced of the futility of struggling against fate, the Emperor Nicholas II at the end of his reign was weighed down not only by disturbances and failures of a political nature, but by all those morbid influences which surrounded him and stifled in him every possibility of active resistance.

To awaken his own initiative and encourage his independence the influence of his immediate surroundings would have had to be directly opposed by some very powerful and solidly-organised force.

If he had seen that the majority of the Imperial Family and all honest men holding high office in the State were harmoniously united in striving to save the Throne and Russia, it may well be that he would not only have responded to their exhortations, but would have been grateful to them for their moral support, and for having freed him from the chains which had bound him.

But from what elements could this solidly-organised force be drawn?

Where could people be found who were ready to sacrifice their own interests?

Long years of Rasputin's influence, with its surreptitious intrigues, had contaminated those who stood high in the government service, had fostered a widespread distrust, and had tainted even the best and most honourable with scepticism and suspicion.

Some recoiled before serious decisions; others no longer believed in anything; while others, again, simply did not bother their heads. . . .

After bidding our visitors farewell, the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich and I would remain alone, reviewing all that we had heard during the day – conversations, rumours and facts; and we would exchange our impressions.

Our deductions were far from encouraging.

One by one our bright hopes were extinguished – those hopes which had been our inspiration in putting an end to Rasputin and had supported us through the nightmare of that unforgettable night of December 16th.

As if I were reading a book, I turned over page after page of all that had passed; my acquaintance with Rasputin, the gradual growth of my resolve to destroy him, the appalling deception to which I had been obliged to resort, and the immense efforts it had cost me to preserve the *rôle* which I had assumed.

With what youthful fervour we had believed that with one blow we could triumph over evil!

To us it had seemed that Rasputin was merely a cancerous growth, and that with its removal the Russian Monarchy would be restored to health. We would not admit that this cancer had become so deeply rooted that its work of destruction would baffle even the most radical measures.

It would have been still more depressing to realise then that Rasputin's appearance on the scene was not merely an unfortunate chance, but that it was inexplicably connected with some hidden process of disintegration which had

already affected part of the Russian State organism. . . .

Those days of arrest in the Sergei Palace taught us how difficult it was to change the course of history even when inspired by the most sincere intentions, when ready for any sacrifice.

But we still hoped for better things, right up to the very last.

And the whole country hoped for, and believed in, this improvement. A huge wave of patriotism had swept over Russia. Enthusiasm was especially marked in both the capitals.

Every newspaper was full of eulogistic articles.

The recent event was interpreted as heralding the extinction of an evil power which had brought Russia to the verge of ruin. Expression was given to the most sanguine hopes for the future, and on this occasion the voice of the press seemed to be a genuine reflection of the thoughts and feelings of the whole country. But this freedom of speech was short-lived. On the third day special orders were issued to the whole of the press, forbiddng all mention of Rasputin. Public opinion, however, found expression by other means. The streets of St. Petersburg wore a holiday air; men stopped each other, and, whether acquainted or not

congratulated each other on what had happened. It was no uncommon sight to see people going down on their knees and crossing themselves as they passed the palace of the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich or our house on the Moika.

Thanksgiving services were held in churches throughout the town. In all the theatres the public demanded the National Anthem, and encored it with enthusiasm. Our health was drunk in private houses, at officers' messes, and in the restaurants. Workmen gave three cheers for us at the factories.

We received numerous letters of congratulation, couched in the most touching terms. People wrote to us from every quarter; from the front, from various towns and villages, from factories, and from public institutions. Partisans of Rasputin also wrote to us, swearing to avenge the death of the *stareis* and to kill us.

The Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna, sister of the Grand Duke Dmitri, in giving us her impressions of Pskov – which was the headquarters of the Northern Front – told us that the death of Rasputin had raised the morale of the army, and had inspired the belief that the Emperor would now dismiss the Rasputin coterie

surrounding him, and gather round him honest and faithful people in their stead.

One word from the Emperor, his summons to a new life – even if it entailed fresh sacrifices for the sake of the country – and everything would have been forgotten, and forgiven. . . .

One day, M. Trepov, President of the Council of Ministers, sent for me.

I had great hopes of this meeting, but I was to be disillusioned.

I was driven, under escort, to the Ministry of the Interior.

M. Trepov had sent for me by order of the Emperor, who desired at all cost to discover who had killed Rasputin.

He greeted me very kindly, reminded me of his intimacy with my parents, and asked me to look upon him, not as an official, but as an old friend of my family.

'You have probably sent for me by order of the Emperor?' I asked.

He nodded in assent.

'And it follows that anything I may tell you will be repeated to him?'

'Why, certainly. I cannot lie to my sovereign.'

'Then you surely do not imagine, after what you

have told me, that I would confess to the murder of Rasputin, supposing that I had killed him? Or that I would give away those who were guilty of it, if I knew them?

'Tell His Majesty that those who destroyed Rasputin did so with the sole purpose of saving the Tsar and their country from inevitable ruin.'

'But,' I continued, 'is valuable time to be lost in tracking down Rasputin's murderer?

'Consider for a moment the significance which all Russia attaches to the destruction of this criminal, the enthusiasm which has everywhere been evoked. The Rasputin government clique has been thrown into complete confusion. And the Emperor? I am convinced that in his inmost soul he also rejoices over what has happened, and is waiting for help from you all. Get together and act, while there is yet time! Surely some of you realise that we are on the brink of a terrible catastrophe, and that if the Emperor is not forcibly extricated from this magic circle in which he is confined, then he himself, all the Imperial Family, and all the rest of us will be swept away by the wave of revolution.

'Disaster is inevitable, unless it be averted by a sweeping change of policy from above.'

The Minister listened to me with astonishment and attention. He was evidently unaccustomed to such plain speaking.

'Tell me, Prince,' he said suddenly. 'How did you acquire such self-control and presence of mind?'

I made no reply; and he said nothing more.

My conversation with the President of the Council of Ministers was the last appeal which we made to high government officials.

CHAPTER XXI

BANISHMENT

OUR fate was as yet undecided.

At Tsarskoe Selo there were endless conferences to determine what treatment should be meted out to us.

On December 21st. my father-in-law, the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich, arrived in St. Petersburg. On learning of the danger which threatened us he had travelled from Kiev, his headquarters as Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Air Service. He came straight to the Grand Duke Dmitri's palace, and then went on to Tsarskoe Selo.

The result of his interview with the Emperor was that later in the day General Maximovich arrived at the Sergei Palace, with the Emperor's orders that the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich should immediately leave St. Petersburg for Persia, where he was to report to General Baratov, Commander-in-Chief of the Persian Division. His late tutor, General Laiming, and Count Kutaisov, A.D.C. to the Emperor, were to accompany him.

At 11 p.m. the Prefect of Police came to

announce that the Grand Duke Dmitri's train would leave at two o'clock in the morning.

I also was ordered to leave St. Petersburg. My place of confinement was to be our estate Rakitnoe in the Province of Kursk.

My train was to leave at midnight.

I was placed under the surveillance of Captain Zenchikov, an officer-instructor of His Majesty's *Corps des Pages*, and we were to be accompanied to Rakitnoe by Ignatiev, the Assistant-Director of the Secret Police.

Both Captain Zenchikov and Ignatiev had received strict instructions from Protopopov himself to keep me in complete isolation.

The Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich and I were very loath to part.

Those few days which we had passed together under arrest in his palace had seemed like so many years. We had lived through and thought over so much. We had begun by entertaining so many hopes for changes which would benefit Russia, and we had ended by burying so many of them.

And now fate was forcing us apart; and we did not know when we would meet again, or in what circumstances. The outlook was gloomy. We were oppressed with evil forebodings.

At 11.30 p.m. the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich came for me and drove me to the station.

The public was not admitted to the platform. The station was guarded by a strong force of police.

As he took leave of me, the Grand Duke said that he himself was leaving St. Petersburg in the morning, and that his train would overtake me. . . .

With a heavy heart I entered the carriage. . . .

The third bell rang, the engine whistled shrilly, the platform drifted by and then disappeared. And soon afterwards St. Petersburg vanished into that winter night. The train hurried on its lonely way through the snow-covered fields sleeping in the darkness.

And I too was alone save for the thoughts whch crowded my brain, and the monotonous sound of the wheels as they carried me on.

CONCLUSION

And then began the break-up of Russia. First the Emperor's abdication.

Then the agony of the Provisional Government, doomed from the day of its birth.

Finally, with the roar of guns and the rattle of rifles bombarding both capitals, came the Bolsheviks – and the terrible, bloodthirsty power of the Third International threatening the peace of the whole world.

Through how many horrors our country has lived; how many millions of lives have been lost; how many memorials of our culture have been destroyed.

An emigration unexampled in history followed. Masses of people, equivalent to the population of a whole State, left their country and are scattered in exile all over the world.

This wandering of homeless Russians has continued for years, and no one of us knows when the hour of return will come. Shall we live to see it, or will it be only for our children that the glorious morn of Russia's delivery will dawn?

Exiles always live on hopes of the future and on

memories of the past – more perhaps on the past, for the future no one can foresee.

Each of us cherishes visions of the past; memories of dear ones long since dead; memories of a mode of life that is over; visions of our country, so beautiful, so mighty, and so vast, from its icebound northern shores to the radiant south.

Memory unfolds to us scene after scene, and fills us with yearning for all it depicts – Russia's vast plains, her towns and cities crowned by the church domes shining with gold, the Eastern contours of ancient chapels and battlements, the peace and spaciousness of life in the past.

Mighty Russia has sunk into an abyss. She was mighty not only by virtue of her territories and her military resources, but in the part which she played in politics and history and in the advancement of civilisation.

Foreigners, for the most part, did not know her. The familiar stories of a 'barbarous country' ruled by despotic tsars with the aid of knout and whip are nothing more than crude inventions, often fabricated by those political exiles mostly of alien origin, from whose midst came Trotski, Lenin and Zinoviev.

The western world, unhappily, gave credence to these stories and did not see the real Russia or know her history. It had forgotten that for centuries Russia had been Europe's bulwark against the Mongolian hordes, that she had borne the whole weight of the Tartar yoke, that she had finally cast it from her and under the leadership of the great Muscovite Tsars had been formed into a united and powerful State. The western world had forgotten Peter the Great and Catherine and their successors, whose chief aim was the enlightenment and cultural development of the country. Under the patronage of the Tsars, universities and high schools were founded, science flourished, and art, literature and music attained a level which even now is the admiration of the old world and the new.

There are probably few foreigners to-day who are aware that the daughter of Peter the Great – the Empress Elizabeth, founder of Russia's first university – abolished the death penalty, and that since her time it was never inflicted except by military courts, on political criminals who threatened the safety of the realm.

It pleased fate that after three hundred years of great creative work, a tragic end should overtake

that Russian dynasty which the poet Pushkin, in his drama *Boris Godunov*, describes as 'The Romanovs; the hope of our native land.'

Rasputinism, like some leprous disease, held the last reign in its clutches. It struck down Imperial Russia, together with her last Tsar, whose memory is cherished to-day by everyone of us, with the deepest pain and sorrow.

If 'victors are not judged,' no mercy, in the majority of cases, is shown to the vanquished.

And the Tsar, who witnessed the downfall of Russia, and who, with all his family, met with such a terrible end – is not he one of the vanquished, in the eyes of the world?

He wielded a power which was greater than himself, and he was crushed beneath it when it collapsed on its century-old foundations.

The Emperor's reign might have been one of the most glorious in our history if Russia had not been struck down by revolution almost on the eve of victory, in a war which had entailed countless sacrifices and had demanded the most heroic exertions.

If Russia had conducted the war to a successful end, she might have become the most powerful State in the world; her Emperor might have

become the Supreme Arbiter of Europe, like his predecessor Alexander I after his triumphal entry into Paris in 1815.

But the Russian Empire collapsed when almost on the threshold of victory, and the Russian Emperor perished at the hands of base criminals.

In the minds of most people, the terrible end of his reign has overshadowed all that he achieved and all that he had set out to accomplish – not for Russia alone.

The noble aim of universal peace belongs to the Russian Tsar. The son of an Emperor Peacemaker, he cherished the same ideal; he endeavoured to serve humanity by calling the Hague Conference to realise his dream.

It was not through any fault of his that civilisation was not henceforth delivered from the horrors of war.

To-day, the League of Nations, seconded by the efforts of particular statesmen, spare no pains in averting war. But few people now remember that the first person who conceived this idea on broad, universal lines, devoid of any self-seeking, was the crowned head of the greatest Empire in the world.

The reign of Nicholas II saw the completion of the great reforms inaugurated by his grandfather, the Tsar-Liberator Alexander II.

Representative institutions were formed. Religious freedom was granted. The peasants were given full ownership of their land and were freed from that last survival of serfdom, corporal punishment.

The prohibition of the sale of spirituous liquors in Russia was the direct result of the Emperor's own initiative. Apart from its beneficial effect on their physique and morals, this measure soon opened out new vistas of prosperity for the Russian peasants. The People's Savings Bank overflowed with deposits. Indeed, the peasants grew so rich and needed money so little, that during the war they were unwilling to market their surplus produce; and in consequence of this, there was a shortage in certain food commodities just before the Revolution.

During the reign of Nicholas II a project of universal education and a bill for the establishment of district councils were submitted to the legislative chambers.

Yet everything failed, and perished.

Fate was against the Emperor. In the midst

of his dreams of universal peace he was drawn into the Japanese war, and later into that terrible world-war which, by its death-roll, has dwarfed all previous struggles.

Victory held out to him the promise of a further expansion of the Empire. Constantinople was to come under his sway, and all the Slav races were to be united in an alliance under the powerful protection of Russia. . . . But instead of this, whole provinces were torn away from her. . . .

The long-cherished dream of the Russian people, that Eastern Christianity should be reinstated in its foremost sanctuary – the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Constantinople – might have been realised in the reign of the Emperor Nicholas II. He awaited with impatience the triumphant moment when the Cross should be raised above that dome which for centuries had supported a Crescent implanted there by force. . . .

But the catastrophe of the Revolution resulted in the defilement of the majority of Russia's ancient churches, by the diabolical power of the the Soviets. The cathedral of 'The Holy Virgin of Kostroma, known as Feodorovskaya,' at Tsarskoe Selo, which had been built under the directions of the Emperor himself, and was held by

him in special veneration, was turned into a place of amusement for Communists.

One of the most devout of Russian Tsars, the Emperor had set his heart on the restoration of the Patriarchate in Russia. And yet it was in his reign that the Metropolitan Pitirim, thanks to Rasputin's criminal intrigues, was appointed to the Holy Synod – an office of which he was thoroughly unworthy. The Church's best representatives were passed over, while those who were tainted received advancement.

The Emperor loved his people, and was cut off from them. He was drawn to the pure, unsophisticated soul of the simple Russian peasant. And fate forced upon him, in the guise of a peasant, one who was not only a criminal, a wastrel, and a horse-thief, but an utter traitor – one who brought the Emperor and all Russia to their ruin.

The Emperor longed for a son and heir whom he might train to succeed him, and to whom he could leave a throne that had been well secured.

After long years of waiting a son was born, an intelligent, capable boy; but from the day of his birth he was afflicted with an incurable illness which at any moment might cause his death.

The father did not pass on his crown, he abdicated for himself and his son.

He abdicated on behalf of his son because he would not be parted from him, because he did not wish to see a sick child on a throne already shaken by rebellion.

Few monarchs have bestowed such love and care upon their families. The Emperor Nicholas II was attached to his wife and children with all his heart and soul. Yet it was the Empress, who was devoted to her husband, and was ready to sacrifice everything for his well-being, who was the cause of his failures and fatal mistakes.

She blindly believed in Rasputin, and was completely dominated by his influence. She had implicit faith in the healing powers of those drugs of Badmaev which, in reality, were administered to the Emperor and Tsetsarevich for purposes quite different from those she supposed.

During the whole of his life, the Emperor Nicholas II was dogged by a merciless fate. With his gentle submission to his destiny, could he develop a resolute will which would know neither hesitation nor retreat?

It may be that doubt first arose in his mind during the festivities which accompanied his

coronation, when the triumphal path of the young Emperor, who had repaired to the ancient capital to receive the blessing of the Church on his reign, was strewn with the mutilated bodies of the victims of the terrible catastrophe on the Khodynka.[1]

The simple-minded Russian people looked upon this catastrophe as an omen of evil to come. And the evil came. . . .

All the horrors of his imprisonment, all the insulting behaviour of the revolutionary authorities, the Emperor bore with unaffected gentleness, with true humility, with the high-mindedness of one who was every inch a Tsar.

[1] In his book *Russia* (2nd impression, Cassel & Co., 1905, vol II, p 40), Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace thus describes this appalling catastrophe – 'A day or two after the Coronation I saw Khodinskoe Pole (Khodynka) a great plain in the outskirts of Moscow, strewn with hundreds of corpses During the previous night enormous crowds from the city and surrounding districts had collected here in order to receive at sunrise, by the Tsar's command, a little memento of the coronation ceremony, in the form of a packet containing a metal cup and a few eatables, and as day dawned, in their anxiety to get near the row of booths from which the distribution was to be made, about two thousand had been crushed to death It was a sight more horrible than a battlefield, because among the dead were a large proportion of women and children, terribly mutilated in the struggle' – (Translator's note)

And with unaffected gentleness, with majesty, he died. In honour of conquering kings, memorials are raised, imposing statues are erected, to foster the respect and admiration of their subjects.

But in memory of the Emperor Nicholas II and of his tragic end the Russian people, if the hour of their deliverance sees their moral regeneration, will build a cathedral where they will pray for the soul of the martyred Tsar and seek forgiveness for the grievous sins and monstrous crimes committed in the name of revolution.

APPENDIX

The Emperor's natural kindness, his greatness of soul, his profound and unselfish love for Russia, were manifested not only in the hour of his martyrdom, but in the manner and motives of his abdication. His last manifesto, together with his farewell order to the Army, are documents of human interest apart from their historical significance.

Whatever mistakes the Emperor may have committed while under the influence of his fateful delusions, the welfare of his country was his constant and unchanging care.

It must in justice be acknowledged that most of the Russian Tsars who were described in Europe as 'eastern despots' were inspired with a high sense of duty towards their subjects.

An interesting comparison may be drawn between the maxims of two monarchs each of whom history has styled 'Great.'

'L'Etat, c'est Moi,' said Louis XIV of France.

Peter I of Russia addressed his subjects thus: 'Ye are to know, then, that Peter setteth no value on his own life – if Russia should yet live.'

The Emperor Nicholas II was ever faithful

to the precept of his great ancestor. In his abdication, as in his subsequent refusal to save his own life, Russia was his only thought.

I append the Emperor's manifesto and his farewell order to the Army, in order to recall their contents to remembrance.

MANIFESTO ANNOUNCING THE ABDICATION OF THE EMPEROR NICHOLAS II.

At this time of intense struggle against an external enemy who for nearly three years has been striving to enslave our country, it has pleased the Lord God to send down on Russia a fresh and grievous trial.

The disturbances which have begun in our midst threaten to have a disastrous effect on the further progress of this stubbornly fought war.

The destiny of Russia, the honour of Our heroic army, the welfare of the people, and the whole future of Our beloved fatherland demand that the war shall be conducted at all costs to a victorious end.

A cruel foe is exerting his last strength, and the hour is at hand when Our valiant army, with the

help of Our glorious Allies, will finally overthrow him.

In these decisive days in the life of Russia, We have deemed it Our duty to facilitate the close union of Our people and the rallying of all their forces for the swift attainment of victory; and in agreement with the Imperial Duma, We have decided to renounce the Throne of Russia, and to divest Ourselves of the Supreme Power.

Not wishing to part from Our beloved Son, We bequeath the heritage to Our Brother, the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich. Blessing him on his accession to the Throne of the Russian Empire, We adjure Our Brother to rule in full and unbroken harmony with the people's representatives in the legislative assemblies, on principles which they shall determine, and to take an inviolable oath that he will do so.

In the name of Our dearly-beloved country We call upon all faithful sons of the Fatherland to fulfil their sacred duty to it by obeying the Tsar in this time of grave national crisis and to help Him, together with the representatives of the people, to lead Russia into the path of victory, prosperity and glory.

May the Lord God help Russia. NICHOLAS.

APPENDIX

THE LAST MESSAGE OF THE EMPEROR NICHOLAS II TO THE TROOPS.

Issued by the Chief of Staff of the
Commander-in-Chief.
8th March, 1917, Order No. 371.[1]

After his abdication and before his departure from the zone of the army in the field, the Emperor Nicholas II bade farewell to the troops in the following words:

'I address you for the last time, my well-beloved troops. Now that I have renounced the Throne of Russia on my own behalf and that of my son, the supreme power has passed to the Provisional Government established on the initiative of the Imperial Duma.

'May God aid it to lead Russia along the path of glory and prosperity! And may God aid you, valiant troops, to defend our country against the evil enemy.

'For two and a half years you have hourly

[1] The Provisional Government refrained from publishing this Order of the Emperor. It remained unknown to the army and to the nation.

endured the hardships of military service; much blood has been shed, great efforts have been made; and the day is already at hand when Russia, united with her brave allies by the desire for victory, will break down the enemy's last resistance. This unprecedented war must be fought out to a completely victorious finish.

'Whoever thinks of peace at this moment, whoever desires peace, is a traitor to his country. I know that this is the feeling of every honest soldier.

'Do your duty. Defend our great country valorously. Comply with the orders of the Provisional Government. Obey your officers, and remember that any slackening of discipline is merely a service rendered to the enemy. I firmly believe that unbounded love for our great country abides in your hearts. May the Lord God bless you, and may St. George the Great Martyr lead you to victory.

NICHOLAS.

G.H.Q. 8th March, 1917.

Signed :

General Alexeiev,

Chief of Staff.